

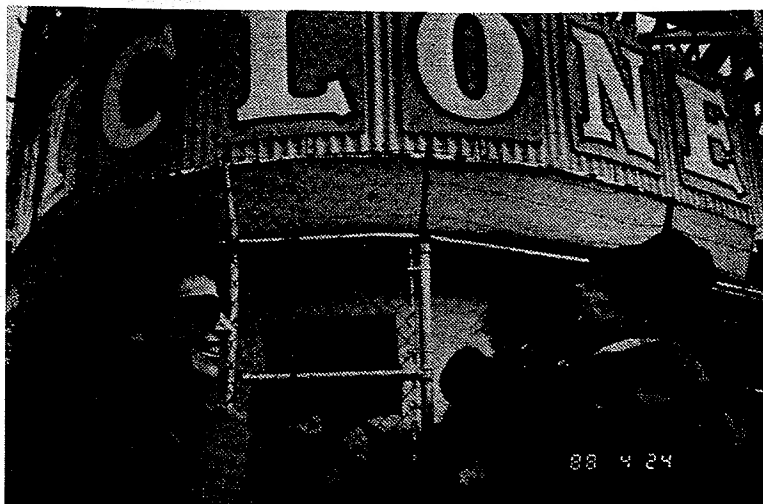


12 *Years*

A FEMINIST PUBLICATION ON ART AND POLITICS

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In memory of
Lyn Blumenthal,
1948–1988,
who was an associate
member of *Heresies*.



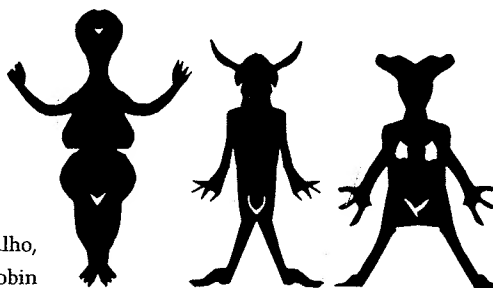
This statement appeared in the very first issue of Heresies in January 1977 and in every following issue. It remains pertinent.

Heresies is an idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact and that in the making of art and all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that *Heresies* will stimulate dialogue around radical political and aesthetic theory, as well as generate new creative energies among women. It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. We are committed to broadening the definition and function of art.

Heresies is published by a collective of feminists, some of whom are also socialists, marxists, lesbian feminists, or anarchists; our fields include painting, sculpture, writing, anthropology, literature, performance, art history, architecture, filmmaking, photography, and video. While the themes of the individual issues will be determined by the collective, each issue will have a different editorial staff, composed of members of the mother collective and other women interested in that theme. *Heresies* provides experience for women who work editorially, in design, and in production. An open evaluation meeting will be held after the

appearance of each issue. *Heresies* will try to be accountable to and in touch with the international feminist community.

As women, we are aware that historically the connections between our lives, our arts, and our ideas have been suppressed. Once these connections are clarified, they can function as a means to dissolve the alienation between artist and audience, and to understand the relationship between art and politics, work and workers. As a step toward the demystification of art, we reject the standard relationship of criticism to art within the present system, which has often become the relationship of advertiser to product. We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women. We are not committed to any particular style or aesthetic, nor to the competitive mentality that pervades the art world. Our view of feminism is one of process and change, and we feel that in the process of this dialogue we can foster a change in the meaning of art.



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ERRATA. Corrections of material appearing in *Heresies* 23: *Coming of Age* appear on page 62.

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You are the reason we started *Heresies* in 1977. We built this magazine on a simple premise: feminist art is not only rooted in the real world, but in the art world. Once upon a time, not so long ago, the notion that art and politics can mix was a heretical thought. Feminist art was viewed as "propaganda," or even worse, as "sociology." Feminists, of course, were deeply committed to both subjects and determined to demonstrate that art, at its best, was indeed "propaganda," and moreover, could have an effect on "sociology," by unraveling the discourses that construct it.

As a result, we decided to publish a magazine that gave equal space to women's art, criticism, and articles (including fiction and poetry) on the social issues that inspire feminists—artists or not. Twelve years ago when we began, there were almost no art magazines that took women's art seriously. From the beginning, one of our long-term goals has been to carve out a significant place for feminist art, but before this mission could be accomplished, it was necessary to make this work visible. Twelve years ago, you saw art by certain (familiar at long last) women artists in *Heresies*—first.

And you saw much more than art. For example, two of our most significant and controversial issues—The Great Goddess (#5), and The Sex Issue (#12),—broke new ground within debates that are still crucial to the project of feminism. The uneven progress of *Heresies* is not unlike the uneven progress of the feminist art movement itself. We have made mistakes, angered readers and authors on occasion (not to mention one another), but we have also brought you reams of material on the crucial issues that have informed our movement and shaped our art.

Where have we been? Where are we going? This is our Anniversary issue, and Anniversary issues are supposed to tackle the Big questions. But, like all *Heresies* issues, this one doesn't contain any Big answers. What it does do, however, is offer a picture of where we are right now. We are pleased with this issue because it touches on some of the same themes we have considered over the years, yet it goes further, updating and continuing to investigate some of the ideas that we hope will continue to inspire, if not push, the women's art movement in an even more radical direction.

It is our view that artists must be key to any movement of social change, and we all know that little changes unless women take the initiative.

Heresies, like any other progressive publication, or any other progressive person, will have to become more radical, more activist, more willing to confront our adversaries in the coming years. The battle for our survival on the earth—an earth we all want to live in—will be fought not only with our bodies in the streets, but with our images, which can travel anywhere.

1976, retreat at Joan

Snyder's farm. Top, left to right: Mary Miss, Joyce Kozloff, Arlene Ladden, Joan Snyder, Patsy Beckett, Elizabeth Hess, May Stevens, Harmony Hammond, Sally Webster, Susana Torre. Bottom: Mary Beth Edelson, Miriam Schapiro, Lucy Lippard, Joan Braderman, Elizabeth Weatherford, Marty Pottenger, Michelle Stuart.



PHOTO: MARY BETH EDELSON



PHOTO: JENNIFER KOTTER

IDA APPLEBROOG *Two Women II* (page 2) and *Two Women IV* (page 3), 1985, oil on linen, two panels each (72" x 74" overall).
 Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

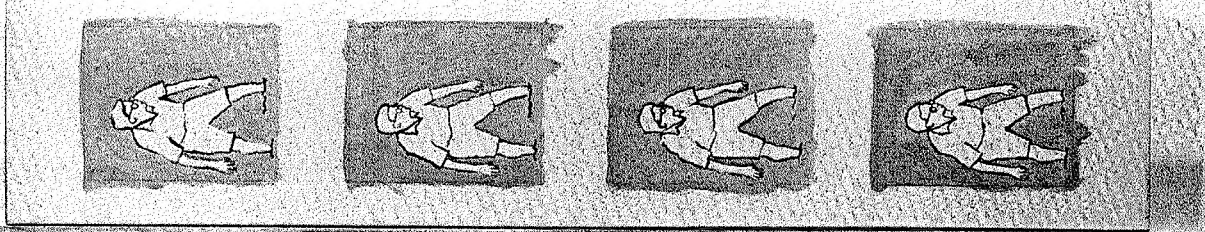
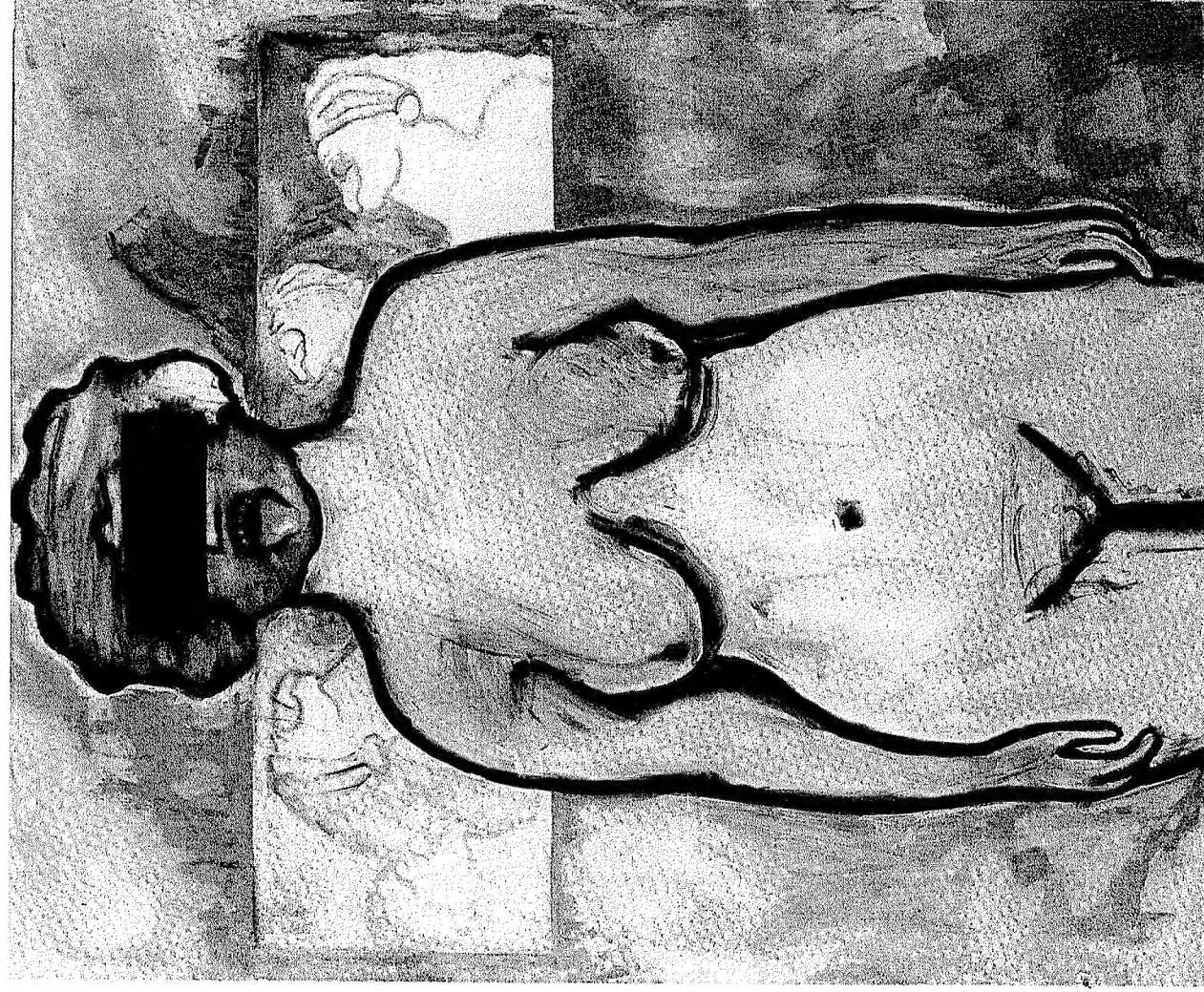


PHOTO: JENNIFER KOTTER

Ida Applebroog, born in Bronx, New York, lives and works in New York City and the Catskills.

CUNTS/QUILTS/CONSCIOUSNESS

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO & FAITH WILDING

In the spring of 1987 we spent a few days looking at hundreds of slides of women's art from the early 1970s through the 1980s. Spurred by often divisive, current debates between "deconstructionist" and "essentialist" schools of feminist criticism and practice, we wanted to take a fresh look at the short history of feminist art by surveying what we could of the work itself and studying its imagery, content, styles, and the conditions and contexts of its production. We also looked for connections and differences between the early feminist art of the '70s and the current practices and works of feminists in the '80s.

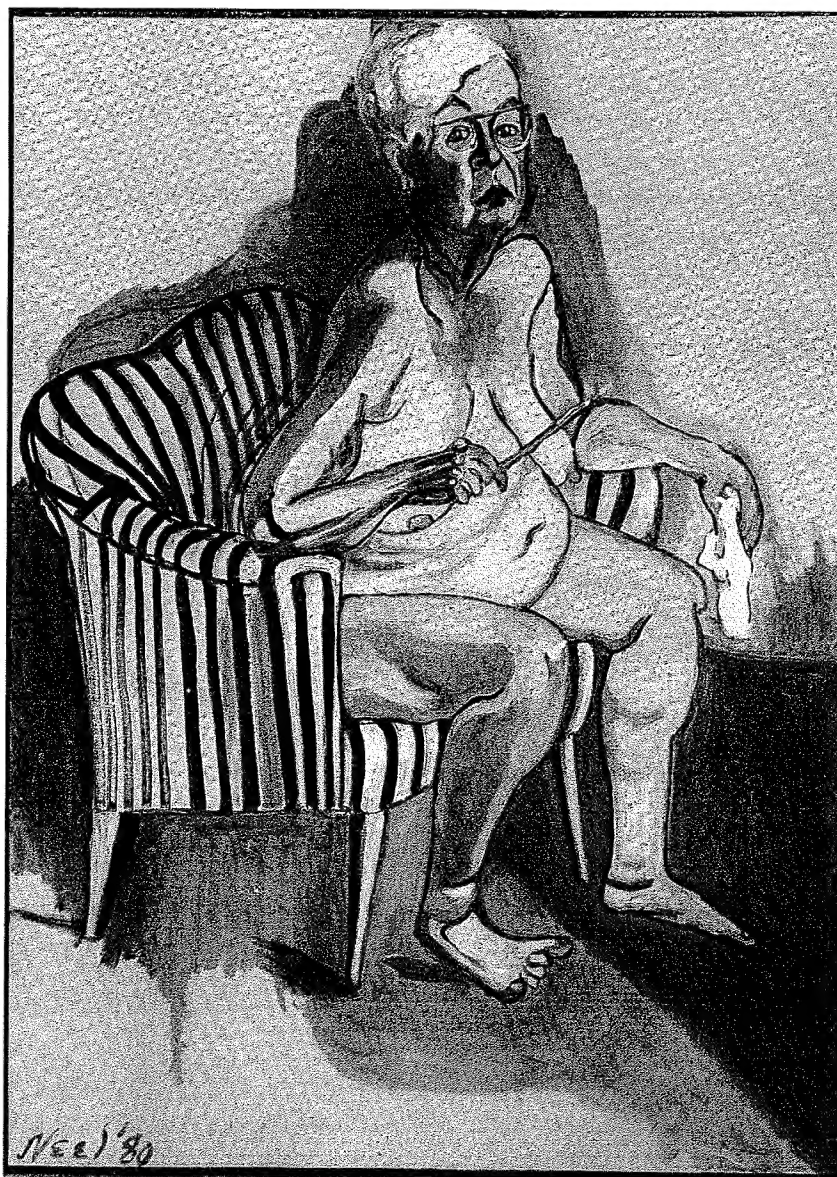
Our slide retrospective overwhelmed us by its clear evidence of a female visual language well established but still evolving. After much sorting and list-making we identified some major subjects of feminist artmaking in the 1970s that particularly interested us and are still fertile in feminist art in the '80s: Cunt/Body/ Spirituality; Autobiography/ Narrative/ Representation (and the Politics of Representation); and Domestic and Traditional Arts: Community and Collaboration. (This is a personal list, not necessarily complete.) The categories refer both to content and subject, as well as to methods, styles, practices, and sources. Thus, for example, performance as a practice could take as its subject the body, autobiography, ritual, or the political analysis of power and domination.

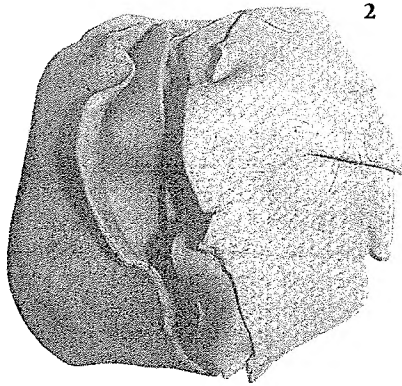
In our essay we present a short discussion of each category and some key visual illustrations, which, due to lack of space, will have to stand in for hundreds of other possible examples. We will demonstrate that the early groundbreaking feminist art explorations of the '70s were a radical challenge to the disciplines of art and art history, and that these strategies opened new possibilities and posed

new questions about received notions of art and its function in culture. It is our view that much of the feminist art of the '80s derives its impetus and strategies from '70s feminist art, although often heavily freighted with currently popular critical theories of representation and gender construction.

Today, the early feminist art movement is often criticized for its crude imagery, fixation on the body, and naive glorification of woman's specialness or

"difference." In bringing about the beginning of a vital cultural/political shift, '70s feminists *were* crude, also passionate, loud, angry, and often mistaken, but they began a movement that is still vitalizing and shaping contemporary art. We firmly believe that the anger, exhilaration, body force, new knowledge, and woman-bonding of the 1970s energizes, enlivens, and inspires the more cerebral and theoretical debates and productions of the 1980s, and will continue to do so.





Cunt, Body, and the Spiritual

In censuring the body, one censures at the same time breathing and speech.

—Susan Sulciman, *The Female Body in eastern Art*

Indeed we must admit that we are still unable to produce a female image or symbol that would counterbalance the monopoly of the phallus in representing desire.

—Jessica Benjamin, "A Desire of One's Own," *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*

The female body is the bedrock of feminism.

—Naomi Schor, MLA Panel, 1987

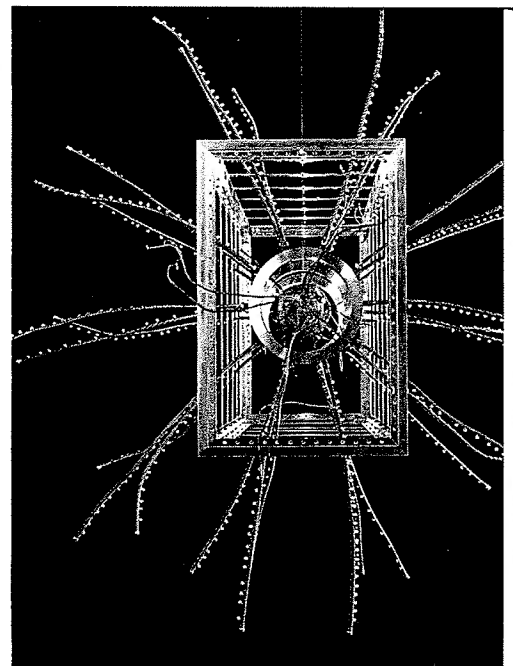
In the 1970s French feminist writers and theorists attempted to "write a woman," to create a sexual poetics of the female. Simultaneously, but independently, American feminist artists began to re-appropriate, reclaim, and re-image the female body—their bodies—in opposition to male cultural constructions of woman/body.

"Cunt art" was a defiant challenge to traditional depictions of submissive fe-

male sexuality. It was a form of body art that could not be absorbed by the mainstream, for it questioned the definition of woman as a [mere] "hole" ("woman is the configuration of phallic lack, she is a hole," as Jane Gallop wrote in *The Daughter's Seduction*). By laying claim to an active female sexuality expressed in an astonishing new lexicon of images, cunt art rejected the view of woman as a passive sexual object. From a woman's point of view the "morphology of cunt" was a new idea. Depicting it as potent, pleasure seeking and giving, sometimes painfilled, sometimes desiring, and infinitely variable, women artists gave this organ a life of its own. Cunt art was a transgressive spark that flashed across the arid field of female representation, signaling new possibilities and provoking laughter, embarrassment, secret glee—and strong disapproval.

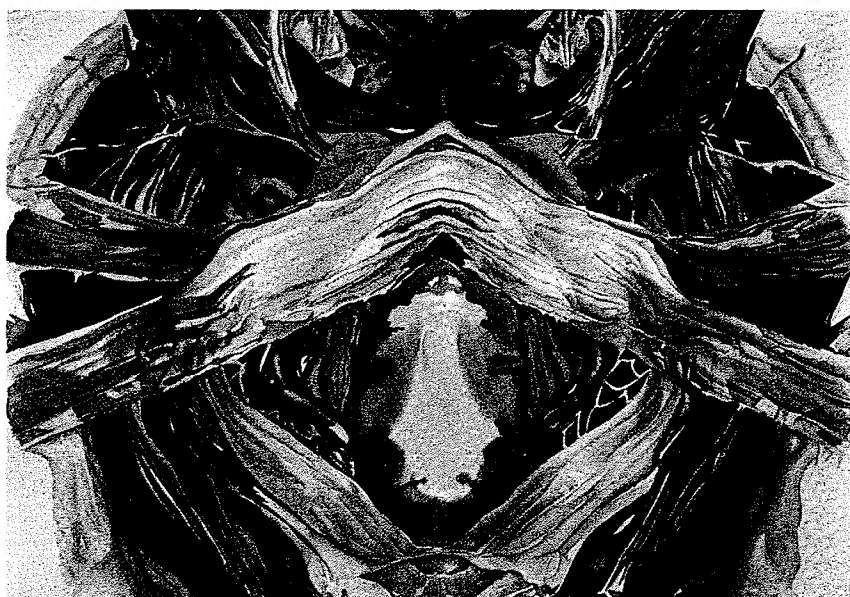
In the early 1970s women made cunt images in a dizzying array of materials and styles: the cunt could be an identified flying object, a pleasure garden, fruit, a room, lair, chapel, futuristic space house, a sculpted porcelain dish, a pearl-inlaid treasure chest, an exploding sphere, pulsating whirlpool, aggressive maw, or burning bush. It was crocheted, stitched, sculpted in lint and marble, painted, drawn, photographed, cast in latex, quilted, and collaged. Cunt art was made by all kinds of women artists, including successful ones who sometimes hid it and young students who often flaunted it. Cunt art was profoundly feminist and liberating—even politicizing.

If cunt art was a positive sign of rebellion and transgression, body art of the 1970s was often more complex and ambivalent; it revealed the way women have



absorbed and reflected cultural constructions of their femininity. For the first time many women produced work with their own naked bodies as subject, exploring them from their personal points of view. The body became the book: it was written upon, painted, photographed, ritually arranged, bathed in eggs, mud and blood (as in the "Ablutions" performance by women from the Cal Arts feminist art program), and draped in flowers, seaweed, or other detritus of the natural and manmade world.

In the 1970s the "Goddess" provided women with a potent new image of the fusion of female sexuality and spirituality. Through research into ancient cultures, feminist artists found a new cosmology, mythology, and rich cultural reservoir of nature images. Women explored their bodies as part of nature, infused by the spirit of the earth, and as related to ritual depictions of the goddesses of past cultures. Both Mary Beth Edelson's altered photographs of her nude body, which she inscribed with spirals, horned moons, wings, and other marks of female spiritual power, and Ana Mendieta's archetypal female forms, made from earth, covered in tiny white flowers, or seared with gunpowder, are powerful examples of contemporary spiritual art. The pioneering work of many women artists has also had a decisive influence on the politics and practice





5

icons; Faith Wilding intermingles male and female bodies in new attitudes of desire, power, and dependency. Sylvia Sleigh, Anita Steckel, Joan Semmel, Judith Bernstein, and others continue their depictions of male sexuality and female desire begun in the mid-'70s.

The theoretical debates of the 1980s have reopened questions of woman's identity and female experience. Do women share "essential" fixed sexual characteristics and identities? Are their gender roles socially constructed, or are they biologically inherent? Does being female mean primacy of the body over the mind? How can women's experience be described in male-dominated language? Amid these debates many feminist artists continue to rely on their strongest source in the attempt to articulate authentic knowledge about their primal body and cultural experience, that is, on their own autobiographies and the collective history of women.

Autobiography/Narrative/ Representation

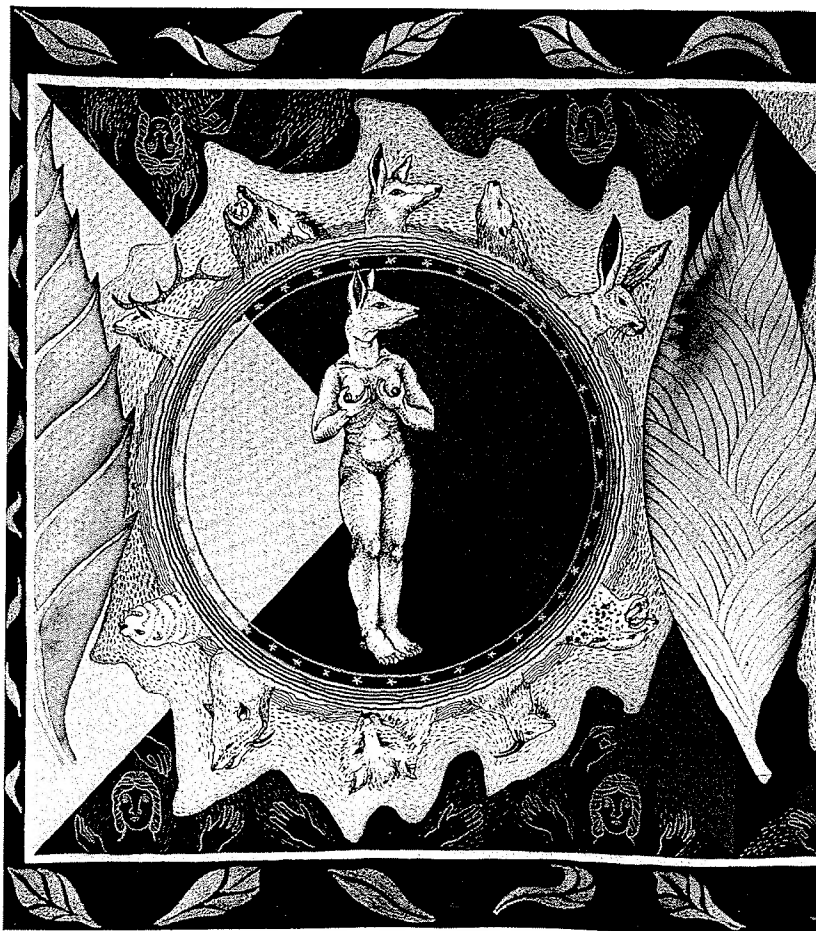
Frequently, moreover, she [the woman writer] can begin such a struggle [writing] only by actively seeking a female precursor who,

of the American Green and ecofeminist movements, both of which have incorporated the issues of women's bodily and sexual autonomy into their agendas.

Self-exploration and autobiography were popular themes for many early feminist exhibitions. These shows demonstrated the clear difference between the classic female nude as painted by men and the actual experience of the female as depicted by women.

The radical expressions of women's sexuality in feminist writing and early cunt and body art have helped to shift our view of "what a woman is." In the 1980s the representation of the female body is still a hot—and hotly disputed—topic. Much of the energy and juicy female pleasure of "cunt" is palpable in Elizabeth Murray's biomorphic, shaped paintings; in Joan Snyder's thick, visceral paintings; in Harmony Hammond's organic abstractions. Woman looking at herself as a socially constructed female has been the preoccupation of Cindy Sherman's photographed tableaux, and is recorded in Mary Kelly's *Interim*, in Martha Rosler's videotape in which a man measures the "vital statistics" of her naked body, in Vanalyne Greene's performances about her eating binges, and in Alison Saar's larger-than-life bodies, which carry a host of inscribed messages. Women who were involved in the early stage of feminist art are investigating female desire and identity with a new pas-

sion fueled by the discussions of French psychoanalytic theory and feminist readings of Freud. In so doing they are also beginning to depict the male body and male sexuality in new ways: Mira Schor's gigantic, visceral paintings combine penises, trees, and ears to suggest new arenas for the interaction of the senses/sexes; Joyce Kozloff playfully combines traditions of erotic imagery from other cultures with American pop



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far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against the patriarchal literary authority is possible.

—Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*

First came the talking (life stories), then came the writing, then the visual images. The work in the first feminist art programs and women artists' collectives began with consciousness-raising—telling the life story. Much early feminist work was realistic, descriptive, literal, narrative. But it was deepened, widened, enriched by historical research into the lives and creative work of women of the past. Soon personal narratives became dialogues with everywoman's autobiography, and we began to see our similarities and differences as women. Feminist artists have, in a sense, become curators of their own history, which is the gathered creative work of women in writing, crafts, needlework, artmaking, cooking, "home-making," and childbearing. This collective work-history becomes a theater for a dialogue between the woman artist and the world in which a new philosophy of woman is being formulated.

This is a feminist version of appropriation, for we have appropriated the history of women and the work of our predecessors as our creative and spiritual base. In contrast, many of the appropriationist tactics so currently fashionable often present only self-reflexive media images, which ignore the rich historical reservoir of women artists' self-representation.

In the early 1970s feminists made many kinds of narrative and autobiographical art. In street performances Jackie Apple and Martha Wilson exchanged lives and identities; Adrian Piper and Vanalyne Greene created fictional selves and flouted acceptable female behavior; Linda Montano and Eleanor Antin took on new personas with new personal histories. These performances challenged and shifted traditional views about women's lives, while also breaking out into new subject matter and techniques for artmaking. Early feminist visual narrative works employed humor, related dreams, and created a new mythology of the female self as in the paintings, drawings, and bookworks of Stephanie Brody Lederman, Hollis Sigler, and Ann Leda (Shapiro). Dottie Attie, Jerri Allyn, Judy Baca, and Nancy Spero also continue to make strong female narrative work in many media.

The critique of gender roles was one of the richest veins mined by students



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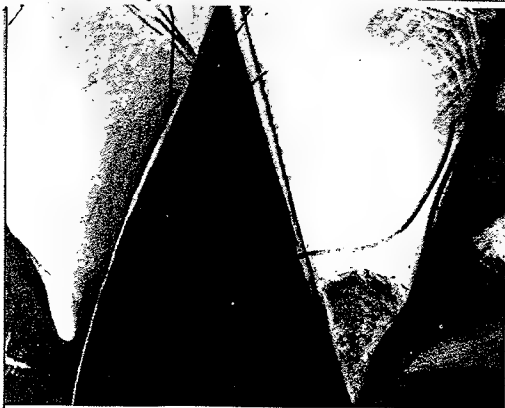
in feminist art education programs. They made "dress-up" photographic self-portraits that explored the pain and artificiality of the masquerade of female stereotypes. These private images rarely entered the "high art" world (as Cindy Sherman's have done), but they were shown in alternative contexts where they influenced much later feminist art. Photographers, including Judy Dater, Judith Golden, and Joanne Leonard, also concentrated on the revelation of self and of female identity, by exploring fashion, costumes, tableaux, and relationships in their pictures.

Woman's experience of herself as "other" was depicted in feminist art from

the beginning and repeated in a thousand variations. "Taboo," an early show at Womanspace gallery in Los Angeles (1974), included many forbidden truths about women's feelings toward motherhood and sexuality, and also the constrictions of being black, old, handicapped, bad, and ugly. No longer taboo, these subjects are stronger than ever in the work of artists like Ida Applebroog and May Stevens. A recent show "Autobiography: In Her Own Image" (curated by Howardena Pindell, at INTAR, New York City, May 1988) collected a powerful body of contemporary narrative and autobiographical work by women from different cultures that revealed both the



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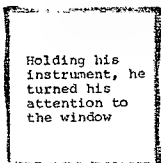


"difference" of female experience and that of being non-white. The narrative/photographic works of Lorna Simpson, Clarissa Sligh, and Pat Ward Williams derive from a strong vein of personal storytelling, revealing painful truths about women's lives, while paintings by

subversions of the signs and symbols of consumer culture. Much of this work analyzes how sexual difference is deeply embedded in language structures and in ideological systems of representation in "high art" and the media. Their work also demonstrates how difficult it is to make alternative, positive, or empowering images of women. But women artists do have another powerful resource to draw upon in the "revolt against patriarchal (artistic) authority": by seeking "female precursor(s)" and by building on the examples of women artists who have led the struggle against the effects of female socialization and who have proved the power and possibility of "female invention."

female predecessors. Traditionally, domestic creativity has often been carried on in kitchen and living-room studios, smelling of garlic, cinnamon, and camphor, littered with colored patches, strands of silk, needles, and pins. The emphasis was on intimacy, on collaboration, on making beautiful and comforting objects with sensuous and tactile appeal. The necessity of this kind of work linked it closely with women's everyday activities—how they talked to each other, learned from and taught each other, defined themselves, dreamed and planned. Thus into the work crept subject matter that spoke directly about women's lives. As Lenore Malin has pointed out, "Women's historical position outside of culture may be what has enabled them to treat the kinds of intimate themes that are usually considered taboo. And for many women artists the taboo has assumed a politically subversive edge" (from the exhibition catalog *The Politics of Gender*, 1988).

Early examples of feminist domestic art include *Womanhouse*. Here an actual house was made into a work of art

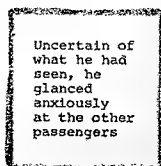


Holding his instrument, he turned his attention to the window



Marina Gutiérrez, Emma Amos, and Margo Machida show us women of color relating to "the grand scheme of things" (from an Amos title) from a female point of view.

Much current work about gender roles is built on early feminist art strategies. This includes Sherman's "dress-up" photos, Barbara Kruger's text/image collages, Silvia Kolbowski's use of fashion images and photographs, and Ilona Granet's and Erika Rothenberg's feminist



Uncertain of what he had seen, he glanced anxiously at the other passengers



Domestic and Traditional Arts: Community and Collaboration

Starting to embroider in a fine-art context was a direct result of my activities with the Women's Liberation Movement from about 1970. At that time I had not found any application of my feminist ideas to art, but felt a strong need to make feminism literally visible. Embroidery was one technique among many which could be combined in new ways to create forms of art truer to our skills and experience.

—Kate Walker, quoted in *The Subversive Stitch* by Rozsika Parker

Kate Walker's experience was shared by many women in the early feminist movement. Though many feminist artists no longer feel connected to the traditional women's arts of needlework, lapwork, and other female domestic handiwork, there are others who have found inspiration and a rich new source of art subject matter and materials in the art of their

to expose, criticize, and celebrate women's traditional creative handiwork. *Womanhouse* was also a collaboration containing other collaborations, such as the *Dollhouse*, a critical piece by Miriam Schapiro and Sherry Brody, which expressed women's ambivalence about domestic roles and presented an ironic commentary on power struggles in the home. Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, with its painted porcelain plates, elaborate needlework runners, and carefully researched history of female production, celebrated women's past achievements and showed how contemporary art can be enriched by reincorporating traditional crafts materials and techniques. In Britain, a group of feminists filled London's pristine ICA Gallery with flapping clotheslines, ovens spilling art, embroidered plates containing quilted food messes—a saucy contrast to the serious (male) art usually exhibited there.

These early collaborations were not only based on the techniques of domes-



tic art, but often made intimacy and relationships between women their subject matter. In this they often harked back to the work of important female precursors. For example, intimacy between women was the subtext of many of Mary Cassatt's paintings. In *The Dressmaker*, the eye is drawn into the picture along the curved back of the working-class woman who is pinning up the hem of a lady's dress. The relationship between the two women is intimate and palpable—the one literally activates the other—and is the subject of the painting.

Feminist researches into the traditional arts of women led directly to the "Pattern and Decoration" movement of the mid-'70s. Determined to "break the minimalist code," Miriam Schapiro, Robert Kushner, Robert Zakanich, Joyce Kozloff, Jane Kaufman, Cynthia Carlson, Valerie Jaudon, and Kim McConnell met to start a movement that would bring back pattern, decoration, opulence, glitz, glitter, and a shameless celebration of beauty. Working together on Issue #4 of *Heresies* ("Women's Traditional Arts: The Politics of Aesthetics") the women of the P&D group realized that women had been restricted by custom—even sometimes by law—to using nonrepresentational patterns, geometric abstraction, and decoration, and been forbidden to make images of humans and of god. For centuries, women had learned to express



much of their subject matter in covert and hidden ways, using color and dazzling pattern to signify passion or anger, compulsive stitchery and texture to denote frustration or exaltation, and as a result had created a distinct female visual language.

The way in which the Pattern and Decoration movement was derived from feminist art practices is only one example of the many ways in which art of the 1970s seeded the art of the '80s. The continuing influence of P&D and of "femmage" (a feminist version of collage) on such artists as Rhonda Zwillinger, Rodney Allan Greenblatt, and Aimee Rankin is evident in their use of decorative materials and glittery objects and colors, and in the design and fabrication of their pieces.

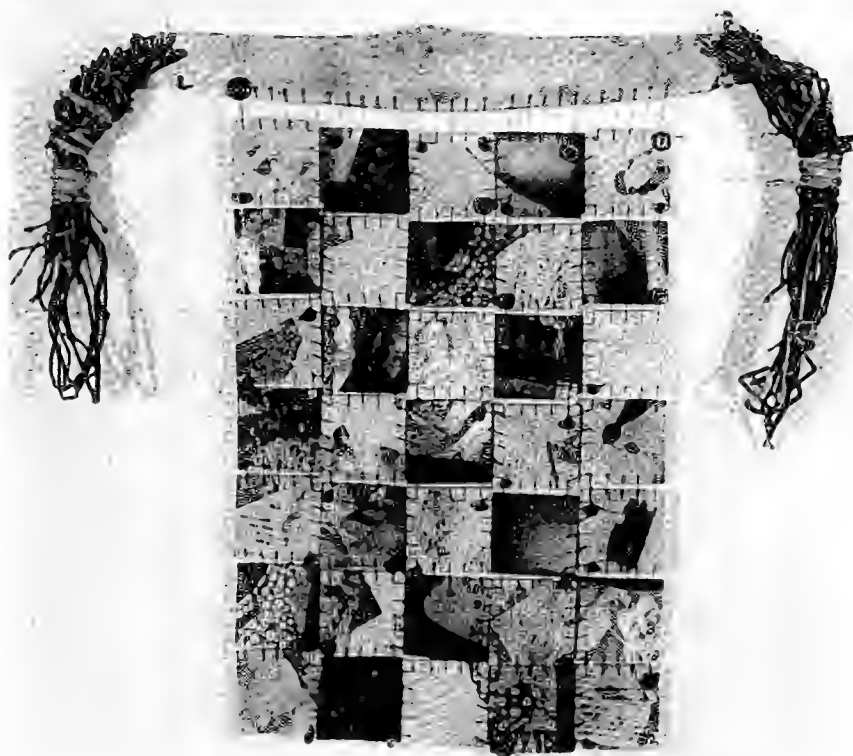
Quiltmaking was one of the most important female domestic activities for many centuries. In the collaborative, community-oriented art of the quilt, lapwork gives way to an ambitious, multilayered work. Transcending boundaries of class, race, country of origin, and history, the quilt is a humanized, democratized art form. Even its subject matter—weddings, commemorations, friendship, freedom, political loyalties, family records—reflects rituals of community life. Once coveted as prized household possessions, quilts are now exhibited as

art works in museums and galleries. Contemporary quilters often collaborate with well-known male and female artists, and many artists use quilt techniques in their work. Jane Kaufman transforms traditional patterns into paintings, while Susan Shie makes wildly inventive, exaggerated trapunto narratives. Faith Ringgold is telling her whole life story in a series of painted, stitched, photomontaged, and written upon "story quilts." Quilts are made by Native American women such as Jimmie Fife, Mae Whitman, and an entire tribe of Seminole artists, who make orthodox quilts as well as using old patterns in contemporary clothing. *Womanhouse*, which exhibited the austere beautiful abstract quilts of Fran Raboff, resembled a quilt in its fabrication, for it was pieced together from fragments of female history. A metaphor of survival and shelter, its thesis was the humanizing influence women have had through the work of their hands.



14

As Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*: "For women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics." Nurturing is not enough. From earliest times women's hands have not been still and their creations of decoration and embellishment in the domestic arena have been their expression of desire— desire for beauty, for a greater life, for embellishing necessity. Sewing a fringe on curtains, pulling threads to form a design on a tablecloth, stenciling a floor, or tatting intricate lace for the edge of a cheap cotton handkerchief—these are all sentient efforts and part of the fabric of female lives. In 1987 performance artist Suzanne Lacy (in collaboration with Susan Stone, Miriam Schapiro, and others) created *The Crystal Quilt*, a grand tableau that paid homage to the ancient female arts of bonding and used the quilt as its central metaphor. Similarly, the AIDS quilt and the Pentagon Ribbon are eloquent contemporary testimonies that the collaborative, satisfying, embracing traditions of female domestic art still enable people to connect and express personal grief, political rage, and joy.



15

Conclusion

In the 1970s the feminist art movement expanded the definitions of art, invited dialogue, and created community. Radical experimenters depicted new subject matter; explored female sexuality, spirituality, passion, and rage; and began to create a distinct female visual language. Defiance of traditional forms led to new amalgams of techniques and processes including "femmage," female narratives

and autobiographies, and the intermingling of high and low culture.

In the 1980s feminists have continued to challenge the disciplines of art and art history by chipping away at the ideological conventions of language and the traditional representation of gender roles, and by opening up new fields of knowledge to the strategies of art.

What then are the challenges and tasks of the future? The issues of woman's desire and pleasure and the

expression in art (and life and politics) of a positive role for women are still paramount concerns. Beyond that, feminist artists must continue to seek new voices for the unheard, the suppressed, and the silenced, and to find ways to enter and change the art system so that their work may be seen more widely and have a greater influence. They must continue to create an interventionist art that poses uncomfortable questions, disrupts unity, and interrupts received notions about female being. Above all, they must infect with laughter, ignite with unseemly passion, and overwhelm with beauty the cold, ironical modes of art so popular today.

Miriam Schapiro is an internationally known artist whose work is represented in museums from New York to Australia. She has just published *Rondo* and is a recent recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Faith Wilding is a feminist artist (all stages) who paints, teaches, writes, makes artist books, and produces radio programs. She lives and works in New York City.

1 Alice Neel, *Self-Portrait*, 1980, oil on canvas, 54" x 40". Collection, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy, Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

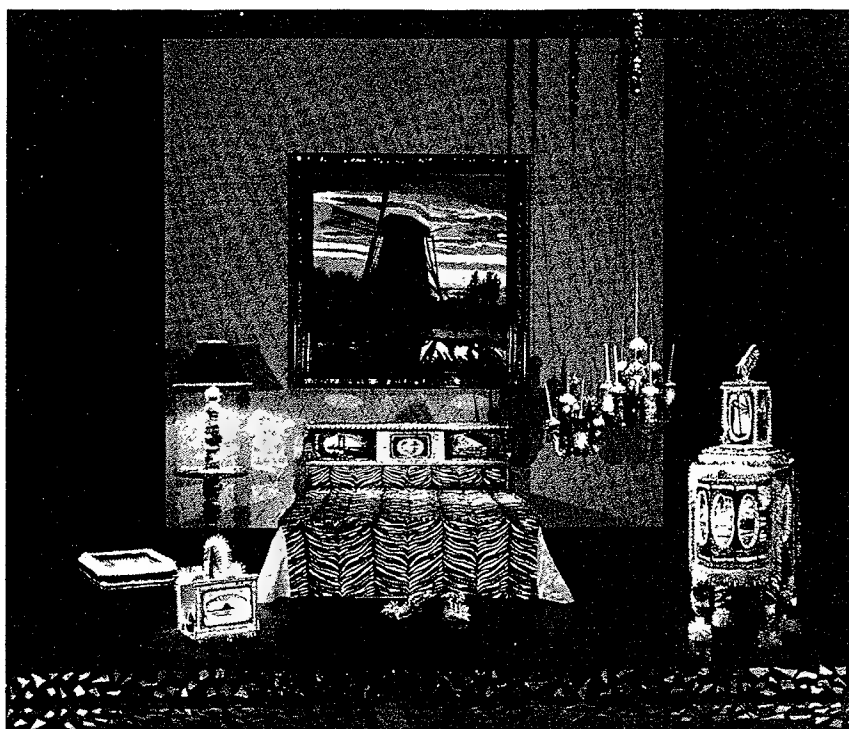
2 Hannah Wilke, *North American Candle Snuffer*, 1966, terra cotta, 12" x 12" x 5". Courtesy, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

3 Gilah Hirsch, *Echo II*, watercolor, 25" x 34 1/2".

4 Bonnie Van Allen, *Family Jewels*, 1988, mixed media, 5' x 5' x 8'.

5 Michelle Stuart, *Stone Alignments/Solstice Cairns* (aerial view), 1979, Rowena Plateau, Columbia River Gorge, Oregon, 1000' x 800'. Commissioned by the Portland Center for the Visual Arts. Photo: Michelle Stuart.

6 Faith Wilding, *Leaf Scroll* (detail), 1987, mixed media on paper, 20" x 17".



16

7 Judy Chicago with Jacquelyn Moore (quilter), *Earth Birth*, 1983, airbrush and quilting, 63" x 135". Courtesy, Through the Flower Corp. Photo: Michele Maier.

8 Emma Amos, "Mama's Best Friend," *Irene at 13*, 1988, monoprint with color laser transfer, 19 1/4" x 12 1/4". Photo: Nicholas Amos.

9 Lucinda Parker, *Grade A*, mid-'70s, charcoal on paper.

10 Dotty Attie, *A Carriage Ride*, 1976, 120 drawings, pencil on paper, 4 1/2" x 4 1/2" each.

11 Bailey Doogan, *Silver Bones*, 1985, oil and modeling paste on canvas, 60" x 48".

12 Jane Kaufman, *Butterflies*, 1987, mixed media, 50" x 50". Courtesy, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York.

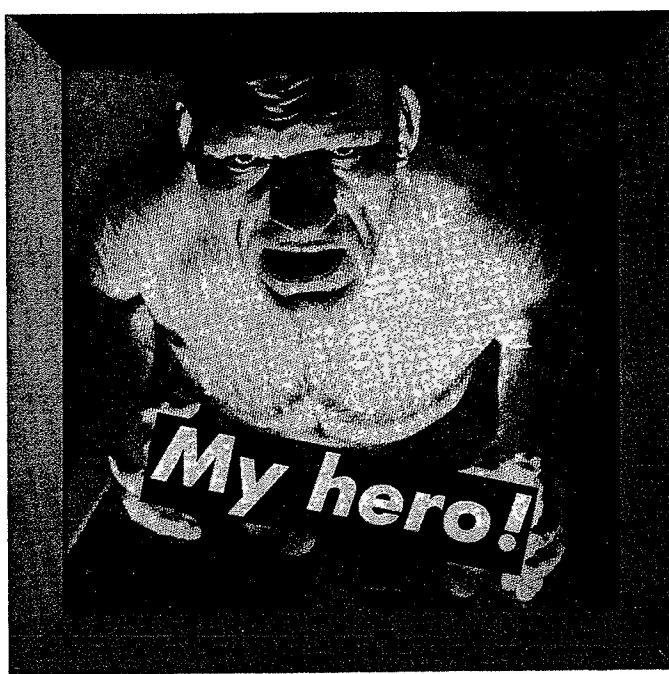
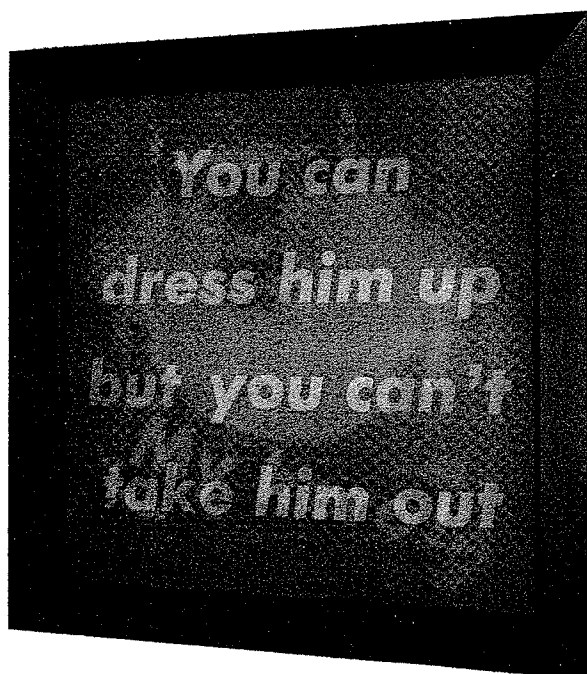
13 Mimi Smith, *Steel Wool Peignoir*, 1966, steel wool, nylon, lace, 59" x 26" x 8".

14 Miriam Schapiro, *Conservatory*, 1988, acrylic and fabric on canvas, 72" x 152". Courtesy, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, New York.

15 Sabra Moore, *Gladys Apron No. 2*, 1985, mixed media, 24" x 24".

16 Rhonda Zwillinger, *Mixed Metaphors*, installation at P.S. 1, Long Island City, New York, January 1985. Courtesy, Gracie Mansion Gallery, New York.

17 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (My Hero!)*, 1986, lenticular photograph, 19" x 19". Courtesy, Mary Boone Gallery, New York. Photo: Zindman/Fremont.



17

FROM LIBERATION TO LACK

MIRA SCHOR

The three phases of the historical and political development of feminism—from the demand for equality, through the rejection of patriarchy by radical feminism, toward a third position that sees the male/female dichotomy as “meta-physical”—present a dilemma to feminists whose own personal maturation has been synchronous with the women’s liberation movement of the early ’70s, the feminist art movement, and the recent influx of French feminist psychoanalytic and linguistic theories, a dilemma that is replicated in the disposition of the books in my library on feminism and feminist art and art-historical analysis.

Equality¹

In a cardboard box stored at my mother’s house: a dog-eared copy of *Our Bodies Ourselves*, *Everywoman* (by the Fresno Feminist Art Program, 1971), and the first issue of *Ms.*

In my closet: a yellowed photocopy of Linda Nochlin’s essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”

On my shelves: *A Room of One’s Own* (every sentence underlined and then reunderlined in darker graphite); *The Second Sex* (inherited from my older sister, the pages nearly powder).

Radical Feminism²

From the Center by Lucy Lippard; *Women Artists 1550/1950* by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin; *Feminism*

and *Art History* edited by Nochlin and Thomas Hess; monographs, catalogues, autobiographies and biographies of women artists: Frida Kahlo, Charlotte, Louise Bourgeois, Alice Neel, Georgia O’Keeffe, Agnes Martin.

Rejecting the Dichotomy³

More accessibly placed in the front row of my shelves: *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock; *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar; *New French Feminism: An Anthology* edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron; *The New Feminist Criticism* edited by Elaine Showalter.

On my sofa, bookmarks stuck between pages: *The Daughter’s Seduction* by Jane Gallop; *Speculum of the Other Woman* by Luce Irigaray; *The Newly Born Woman* by Cixous and Clement; *Sexual/Textual Politics* by Toril Moi.

All is not on the distaff side: back shelf, *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rilke; in the front, *Ways of Seeing* and *The Sense of Sight* by John Berger, *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* edited by Brian Wallis, *Recodings* by Hal Foster; on my sofa, *Male Fantasies* by Klaus Theweleit.

The purpose of this list is not to boast of erudition but to illustrate the feminist dilemma, which is that all of these books remain relevant. Feminism has little institutional memory, there has been no collective absorption of early achieve-

ments and ideas, and therefore feminism cannot yet afford the luxury of storage. Teaching young women to paint, I have found that every young woman who feels in herself the inchoate desire to do something, say something about her life, must begin at the same beginning, or very close to it, that my sisters and I did 17 years ago. The rose-filtered lenses that camouflage patriarchal domination need to be removed, and the ABCs of feminist art history and thought must be learned anew. Thus, a feminist art teacher cannot afford to pack away Linda Nochlin’s signal essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” yet she must also be cognizant of the psychoanalytic and linguistic writings implicit in the very title of Nochlin’s more recent essay “The Origin Without an Origin” (*October*, no. 37). While alert to the need of unformed art students, the feminist teacher must be responsible to the growth of her own work. Women of my generation form a living bridge across ebb tides of feminist thought. It is in the spirit of this role that this essay on feminist art is written.

The earliest proposals for what might constitute feminist art concentrated, in terms of content, on personal experiences

re-examined in consciousness-raising sessions. Untold stories of marginality and repression were shared and reworked into statements of rebellion and affirmation. There was an awakening of body awareness, pride, and anger. Satiric readings of female images in popular culture were attempted. Formally, central-core imagery and layering were proposed as metaphors of female sexuality. Previously trivialized methods of production, such as quilting and embroidery, were redeemed for "high art."

These proposals were based on empirical observations of thematic and formal recurrences in art by women (and it is remarkable how persistent these occurrences are), and fueled by the understandable desire (urge) to define and validate what a visible "Other" might be. Innocent and idealistic, and also in opposition to male representations, women artists sought to create representations of female sexuality, of femaleness, and femininity. In their search a belief in representation was evident and implicit.

In the last decade, the work of French psychoanalytic and linguistic theorists has served to undermine the stability of concepts such as identity, authorship, origin, representation—precisely the concepts that American feminists had been trying to resituate within the art work of women artists.

It is a familiar irony in the history of feminism that the goals feminists fight to achieve are declared insignificant or in error just as the goals are at last met. For example, in the nineteenth century, just when women art students were finally admitted to drawing classes with a male nude model, the nude lost its primacy as a concern of art. Some of the ideas of French feminism might seem to operate in a similar pattern of frustration. This is not to say that there are no threads linking the old feminism (Anglo/American) and the new (French). There are times when the description that an Italian waiter once nightly affixed to a pensione's endless re-presentations of veal—*la même chose* ("the same thing")—applies, but with different references and more sophisticated and erudite methods of analysis and critique. American feminism of the early '70s un-



CINDY SHERMAN *Untitled Film Still*, 1979, black-and-white photograph, 10" x 8".
Courtesy, Metro Pictures, New York.

veiled the sexism embedded in the quotidian experience of our culture, and further, in Western, Greco/Roman, Judeo/Christian civilization. French feminism restates the problem, indeed deepens it, by positing that a person's very acquisition of language, her entry into culture, is an inscription into the world of the Phallus, the law of the Father, which language is. (These are ideas primarily developed by the French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan.) Any effort to ignore this law, to search for a definition and a representation of female sexuality, crosses a field mined and snared by phal-

locentric logic; to seek to define the "Other" is still to operate within the framework of a "binary system" in which the Phallus is the primary referent, yet to try to expose the flaws in phallocentric thought by taking its arguments to their logical ends, to use phallocentric thought against itself by "miming" it, is to risk being "recuperated" (remember how feminist art themes and forms used to be "co-opted" by male artists?—*la même chose*, only different). So one can find oneself literally in a *no-man's* land, where, as Janis Joplin so aptly put it, "women is losers."

A question central to the visual artist, then, is how women artists have represented female sexuality, which has been specularized² and fetishized by men, yet posited as unrepresentable because unseeable, unknowable, and unthinkable. This question is addressed in the work of more women artists than one essay could sensibly deal with; this essay will concentrate on some work dealing with the representation of female sexuality as interpreted in recent feminist critical writings, or work preceived by contemporary art critics to be dealing with "issues of representation" and "originality."



Cindy Sherman's work is generally considered an exemplar of the instability of identity. Also, her work functions as textbook illustration of recent critical analyses of the "specularization" of woman; it seems to spring from and to cause a proliferation of text:

Is it necessary to add, or repeat that woman's "improper" access to representation, her entry into a specular and speculative economy that affords her instincts no signs, no symbols, or emblems, or methods of writing that could figure her instincts, make it impossible for her to work out or transpose specific representatives of her instinctual object-goals? The latter are in fact subjected to a particularly peremptory repression and will only be translated into a script of body language.
—Luce Irigaray³

Now the little girl, the woman, supposedly has nothing you can see. She exposes, exhibits the possibility of a nothing to see.
—Luce Irigaray⁴

When you lose your mind, it's great to have a body to fall back on.—Shari, Calvin Klein commercial

Formally mimicking "cultural productions" dominated by male specularity—movies and commercial photography—Sherman poses and *makes herself* up; there is no one "I" in her work. She is a blonde lying on a bed dressed in a black bra and panties, mouth half-open, eyes unfocused, body akimbo in a pose hinting at post-orgasmic stupor, or, more likely, a police photographer's view of a crime victim. She is a crouching young girl in a red calico dress, looking up innocently and fearfully. She is a sweating, open-mouthed, vacant-eyed, prone woman in a wet T-shirt. She is a witch, a pig, a pimply ass, a corpse half-visible under dirt and debris. A complete survey would

indicate that a substantial number of the women "enacted" by Sherman are either squatting, crouching, or prone, crazed or dead. More "positive" images tend to look stupid or have a slight mustache.

The possible interpretations of this category of "negative" representations (representations of negativity, a "nothing to be seen") unfold in a peculiar sequence which reflects the changes in her work. The ironic intention of these textbook representations of the "Other"—cunt, witch, shrew, bimbo, victim—presumably ensures that they will be seen as *critiques* of this vision of woman, in much the same way that critics have explained away images of woman in the work of her male contemporaries (such as David Salle).

One has to see a Sherman photograph on a person's wall to understand the nature of its appeal: a wet T-shirt clinging suggestively to breasts is *la même chose*, whether you call it *draperie mouillée* (Kenneth Clarke, *The Nude*) or tits and ass. These negative representations are disturbingly close to the way men have traditionally experienced or fantasized women. Sherman's camera is male. Her images are successful partly because they do not threaten phallocracy, they reiterate and confirm it.

And yet another interpretation of Sherman's negative representations allows the female artist's sense of her own monstrosity, the monstrosity of her project of being an artist, to seep to the surface. The "anxiety of authorship" proposed in *The Madwoman in the Attic* results from the conflation of two phenomena faced by women artists: "the dominant patriarchal ideology presents artistic creativity as a fundamentally male quality" and the "dominant images of femininity are male fantasies"⁵—the "Angel in the House" and the Whore. Women artists seek to adopt/adapt male forms in order to be read (in order not to be thought to babble incoherently in "no-man's" language), but their sense of monstrosity in rejecting these fantasy images and of the monstrousness of their anger against these images lurks more or less veiled within their work, like Mr. Rochester's first wife, hidden but unconsciously violent.

Sherman denies the element of self-portraiture, and there is much criticism of the autobiographical "phallacy" which would limit women artists to their (biologically determined) experience and limit the work of art by chaining it to one author. Nevertheless, Sherman is the artist and her model, the camera and its image. The more successful she becomes

commercially, the more she dares her public to turn away from images so hideous they couldn't possibly sell (predictably they do)—images of the relentless degradation of woman until she molds under ground. In a 1985 tableau (#150) she is seen from above, her face is covered with sweat, her hand touches a grotesquely large red tongue. Her expression is one of subservience yet rebellion. Perhaps a sexual slave, she is also monstrously huge in relation to the teeny "normal" figures in the background. A 1987 image (#175) presents a bulimic apocalypse in which only Sherman's tiny, prone, screaming reflection in mirrored sunglasses remains amid half-eaten junk food and vomit. A rejection of junk culture, it is also a case history of a female disorder—disruptive of the more conventional sexuality of her early work. The monstrosity and self-hatred of female authorship, increasingly evident in Sherman's impersonations, run rampant over the irony and create, paradoxically, a powerful feminist body of work.

But woman has sex organs just about everywhere. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere. Even without speaking of the hysterization of her entire body, one can say that the geography of her pleasure is much more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined—in an imaginary centered a bit too much on one and the same.—Luce Irigaray⁶

Sherman's hysterical reenactments of specularization and of the monstrosity of a woman artist's rebellion focus on aspects of female sexuality related to woman as the object of the male "gaze," as a "nothing to see." Works by other women artists move toward metaphors of the multiplicity of female sexuality, of "This sex which is not one." The "geography of her pleasure" is mapped out on the scattered leaves of the "Cumaean Sybil" discovered by Percy and Mary Shelley and reilluminated by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. The legendary poetess's histories and prophecies, traced in undecipherable languages, are strewn about a dark cave. This vision of "the body of her precursor's art, and thus the body of her own art, [lying] in pieces around her,

dismembered, dis-remembered, disintegrated"⁷ is bracingly close to the experience and the work of many significant women artists.

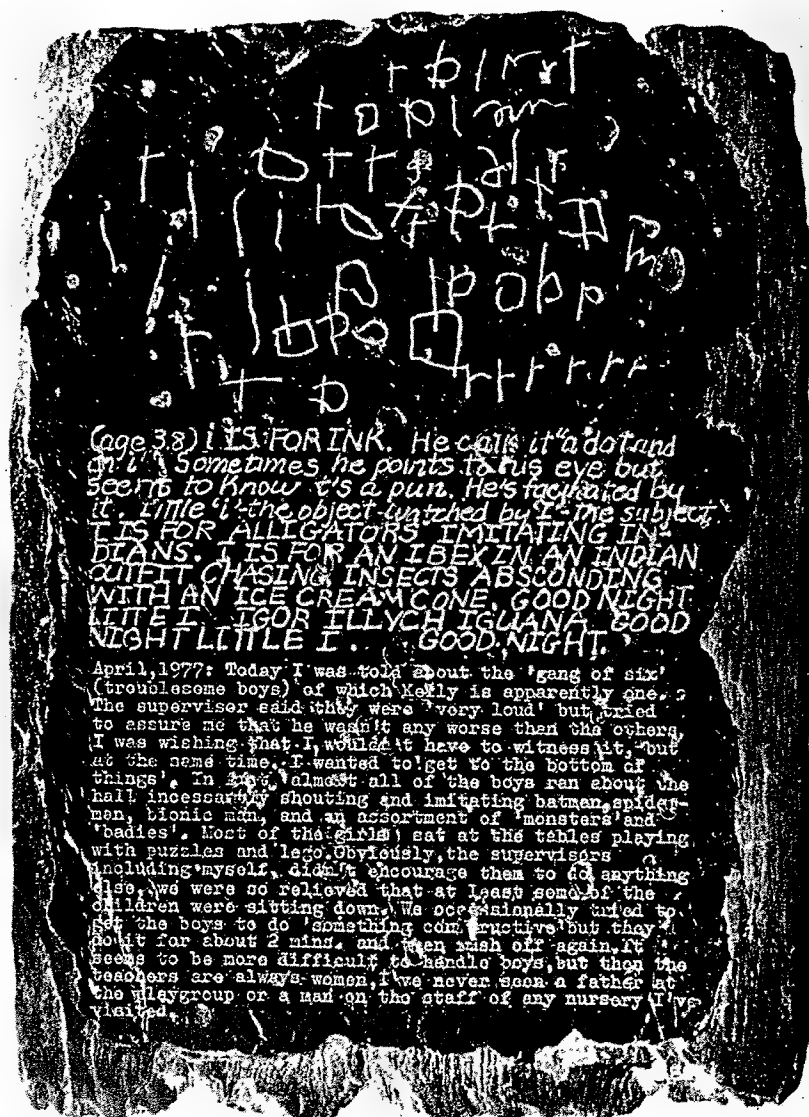
Significant and monumental works by women artists have been constituted by a proliferation of "Sybil's pages," multiple images, often rectangular, framed and placed along a grid. The works I have chosen to examine in content and intent span several phases and families of recent art and feminist thought.

Hanne Darboven covers the walls of the gallery (cave) with identically framed works which bypass the pitfalls of male language by presenting texts that are not texts, in any decipherable sense. Her environments, of systems, indexes, and numbers, hint at an unclosable infinity of references. The pages of this Sybil are covered with an uncracked code, but laid out in the irreproachable (male) grid.

Darboven's austere neutral (neuter) and obsessively expansive cyphers can be bookended with Mary Kelly's obsessional documentation of truly the oldest female profession, being the mother of a son. Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1976–1980), a diary of her son's early years, is considered the epitome of art informed by Lacanian theory:

Kelly's work is an attempt to find a way to expose these processes [representation, language and sexual position] and their significance for both woman and art. She has constructed the document in order to show what lies behind the sexual division of labour in child care, what is ideological in the notion of natural maternal instinct, what is repressed and almost unrepresentable in patriarchal language, female subjectivity. In making the mother and child relation the subject of her art work, she is addressing some of the most politically important and fundamental issues of women, art and ideology.—Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock⁸

Indeed, Kelly's work has many characteristics of feminist art in its early stages: it is multiple, layered in time; its subjects are motherhood, nurturing, separating. It is autobiographical and biographical in its obsessively complete narration of infant development. From Darboven's barren but infinite cryptography, we have come in *Post-Partum Document*



MARY KELLY "Document 6" from *Post-Partum Document*, 1979, resin on slate. Collection of Arts Council of Great Britain. Courtesy, Postmasters Gallery, New York.

to the all too familiarly decipherable saga, whose heroic subject is a little boy-child who triumphs against the engulfing intimacy with the mother's body and enters into language. The piece, which begins with impressions of the body's shit on his diapers—a Lacanian Shroud of Turin—ends when he learns to write his own name.

The name of the Mother remains unwritten. And exegeses of Kelly's work, while illuminating, leave important (and obvious) questions unasked. Would a work based on the development of a hypothetical girl-child lead to an as predictably Lacanian conclusion? And would the critical realm have valued a piece dedicated to a "nothing to be seen"? As Irigaray has noted: "the mother/daughter, daughter/mother relation constitutes an

extremely explosive core in our cultures. To think it, to change it, amounts to knocking over the patriarchal order."⁹

Between these bookends lie the pages of the supposedly genderless, successful artists of the '80s. Multiplicity of forms and images, a type of layering, occurs in the works of Jennifer Bartlett and Pat Steir. Bartlett's *Rhapsody* and *In the Garden* and Steir's *A Vanitas of Style* and her self-portraits in the style of great (male) masters are major works in which mimicry of male styles is inscribed and deconstructed within the format of "ready-made grids, a code prepared in advance"¹⁰ (male).

Bartlett's pieces are encyclopedic assemblages of basic subjects of traditional representation (tree, house, figure) and visual components (color, geometry,

mark), all on identically measured squares or rectangles. There is no "I" at all, only a hundred mimings of other identities. In *Vanitas* Steir brilliantly mimics styles and techniques from the history of art. In her self-portraits, an "I" appears repeatedly, yet transformed, disfigured, by the lens of male self-portraiture. A new Alice in Wonderland, she leaps through the "mirror phase" into the Symbolic Order.

This art of the myna bird is a virtuososo brand of guerrilla warfare, for the Annie-Oakley-I-can-do-anything-you-can-do-better excellence of its "mimicry of male discourse."¹¹ The equivalence implied by the multiplicity of imagery seeks to undermine the coherent face of phallic identity, by belying its claim to uniqueness or originality. Both Steir and Bartlett make no effort to represent a female Other. They confront a male audience with its own image, in a fractured, albeit gridded, mirror.



One can detect a link between current theories about origin and originality, representation and reproduction, and the "law of the same," which ordains that "woman's only relation to origin is one dictated by man's."¹² The injunctions against concepts of origin and originality central to "simulationist" art, for example, seem to go hand in hand with those injunctions against female representation. The undermining, in deconstruction and simulation theory, of any integrity of representation specifically represses female representation. The art that is presently validated relies on theory and language, and language, we are told, is the Father and the Phallus. In its repression, representation is feminized.

One returns then to the problem of representations of female sexuality or femininity, that is to say, the problem of essentialism:

Essentialism in the specific context of feminism consists in the belief that woman has an essence, that woman can be specified by one or a number of inborn attributes which define across cultures and throughout history her unchanging being and in the absence of which she ceases to be categorized as a woman. In less abstract, more practical terms, an essentialist in the context of feminism, is one who instead of carefully holding apart the poles of sex and gender maps the feminine onto femaleness, one for whom the body, the female body that is, remains in however complex and problematic a way the rock of feminism.—Naomi Schor¹³

Women are waved away from the door marked "essentialism" by deconstructionist critics and by others afraid of the biologicistic implications and dangers: they altruistically warn of essentialism's error of logic, the trap door of binary oppositions (male/female, active/passive, culture/nature). Woman is waved back, but to what? ... to PHALLUS and LACK, lack, lack, the keystones of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Like

"In our difference is our best hope for universality, or specificity."

Bluebeard's last wife, she may nevertheless be impelled to open the forbidden door, even if that act reeks of the illogical, the biologicistic, the binary. And in there are the wives Bluebeard has killed, a locked room full of lacks (whose portraits Cindy Sherman may have limned in her tableaux of self). But what of the still-alive wife, who opens the door?

Phallic culture (from all accounts a redundancy) has done everything to prevent, to disable women from achieving any representation of self that would not return to the primacy of the Phallus, one way or another. And while it is certain that all women are permeated by the phallogratic order, efforts to escape the system, to enter a no-man's land, are understandable, even laudable, however quixotic. The injunction against essentialism seems a continuation of the repression by Western civilization of woman's experience (of which sexuality is only a part), and it should be defied, no matter the risk.

Opening Bluebeard's door takes many forms. One, certainly, is the feminist spin I have sought to put on works by women who attempt to bypass feminist interpretation in order to gain wider acceptability. It is a common reflex of women artists wishing serious consideration (and deservedly so) by mainstream standards of judgment to suppress and deny the female quotient of their art, to refuse to admit to difference. Georgia O'Keeffe's vehement denials of the sexual content of her images is a classic example of the wish to "pass." Cindy Sherman's denials of self-portraiture and of feminist intent (female rage) are a contemporary version of the same reflex. It is quick and deep: "of course my work is of universal import, I am an artist first, a woman second." As Susan Rothenberg remarked in an interview, "When I'm in the studio, I'm just a painter."¹⁴ No one wants to be part of a second class, no one wants to be

marginal (although men can freely co-opt feminist ideas and forms, and can self-righteously search for and claim an anima ... and get brownie points for trying).

It may be worthwhile heeding Cynthia Ozick's warning to Jewish writers with a comparable desire to assimilate:

We can give ourselves over altogether to Gentile Culture and be lost to history, becoming a vestige nation without a literature; or we

*can do what we never dared to do in a Diaspora language: make it our own, our own necessary instrument, understanding ourselves in it while being understood by everyone who cares to listen or read.*¹⁵

In our difference is our best hope for universality, or specificity. The Surrealist movement, in its preoccupation with the irrational and the unconscious, was in a sense the artistic apotheosis of lack (significantly the Surrealist movement begins with Freud and ends with Jacques Lacan). The very intensity of its focus on lack makes it the perfect site for its reinvestigation by women artists.

The male Surrealists ... passionately desired woman's ability to bear children, which is why they desired woman. Indeed, I would argue that much of Surrealism is an attempt to appropriate woman's power to give birth by every treacherous means possible. Much Surrealist imagery can be understood as the product of a false pregnancy—a strangely aborted product from a female point of view.—Donald Kuspit¹⁶

Works by women artists such as Frida Kahlo, Louise Bourgeois, and Elizabeth Murray are representations of femininity whose organic forms and stylistic peculiarities owe much to these "strangely aborted" Surrealist products. These characteristics are often described by post-modernist critics as narcissistic and fetishistic, yet these works deal directly with female body experience, sexuality, fruition, barrenness, and the quotidian facts of woman's life.

To begin by juxtaposing Kahlo's self-portraits to Sherman's, one might note that Sherman's work clearly has a Surrealist dimension, as it slides into dream-like irrationality and fairy-tale grotesquerie. Whether self-portraits or not, hers are hardly "realist" works. In Kahlo's openly autobiographical work, an exactly controlled, detailed and smooth paint surface, biomorphic forms, and dream-like scenes that are retablos of her own life parallel work by male Surrealists. But, in her work, the tragedy of truncation (real) and infertility (real, not, as in the case of the Surrealists, fanciful), and the possibility of fruition through art, are depicted directly, without disgust, without sentimentality, without irony. In *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) she lies naked in a pool of blood on a large hospital bed in an empty space far away from "man's land" (the factories of Detroit); from her hands flow veins of red blood/paint toward images of sexuality and loss. She is alone with pain and paint. It is a rich solitude, transfiguring clots of endometrial blood into the richly colored matter of painting.

Louise Bourgeois also claims no distance from physical experience and autobiography. Her insistence on the source of her work residing in psychological

wounds inflicted on her by her father contravenes any formal theories of art and yet embodies the Oedipal crisis that psycholinguistic theory interprets as the entrance of human beings into the Symbolic Order of the Father. Bourgeois obsessively returns the critical audience of her work to its motivating source—the murderous rage of a betrayed daughter. Her admission to the Symbolic Order has been warped by her father's open affair with her governess, yet her link back to the Imaginary (completeness of relation to the Mother) is damaged by her mother's presumed complicity.

The forms that Bourgeois' anger takes are directly related to those of Surrealism. The influence of "Primitive" sculptures and totems is pervasive. "Primitive" art was a locus of the (female) unconscious of "civilized" (non-primitive) Western man; its influence on a woman artist is bound to differ. Bourgeois' *Femme/Couteau* and Giacometti's *Spoon Woman* are kin but they are not sisters. *Spoon Woman* has a tiny head and a large receptive body. *Femme/Couteau*, in its degree of abstraction, is ambivalent and bisexual. It is a vulva and a knife—what woman is and is feared to be. Bourgeois' forms are blatant vaginal, mammary and womblike, yet

exuberantly, mischievously phallic. It would betray her intent to deny the role of her own body experience. The rawness of her surfaces and the openly sexual nature of her forms vitalize the organic/biomorphic Surrealist vision of lack and dissolve the distance the male viewer seeks to place between himself and the art object and between consciousness and his own suppressed physicality and mortality.

Elizabeth Murray's paintings are not only of organic forms, they are organic forms. Like the fluids of Irigaray, like the creature in *Alien* (a mother, it turns out!), the paintings push away the rectangular frame and the picture plane, not in the additive and self-consciously art referential (reverential) manner of Frank Stella, but in a stream of interlooping, thrusting and curving sweeps of saturated color—as their subjects, the contents of daily and studio life, are swept off their feet toward abstraction. Even her drawings insist on reshaping the frame of traditional art; but while the frame is forced to zigzag around the drawing, the drawings often center around a round, wooden clitoral plug affixed to the gritty pastel surface.

These works by Kahlo, Bourgeois, and Murray may seem subservient to Surrealist influence. But they are by women, and, as such, the disturbing possibility of his own castration inherent in the fetishized object is doubled for the male viewer. "The idea that a 'nothing to be seen,' a something not subject to the rule of visibility or of specula(riza)tion, might yet have some reality would indeed be intolerable to man."¹⁷ Perhaps more disturbing, then, is the possibility that the female experience of container/contained, inside/outside, evidenced in these works intimates that woman is not just a lack, not just a hole, but w/hole, that the lacks represented in these works are full metaphors for the membrane between thought and matter, life and death, which is at the core of art.

Postscript

Important work has been left out, unhappily. The "pattern and decoration" work of such notable feminist artists as Miriam Schapiro and Joyce Kozloff did not quite fit into the pattern of this particular train of thought. Further along the loom of woman's work, one might have included the work of the German artist Rosemary Troeckel, but I have not yet had the opportunity to see it "in person." Other pages from the Sybil's cave beg inclusion—the works of Eva Hesse, Nancy Spero, Agnes Martin. Many of these works would lead to another essay altogether, on the role of abstraction (understood in a formalist sense) as a metaphor for female sexuality.

FRIDA KAHLO *Henry Ford Hospital*, 1932, oil on metal, 30.5 x 38 cm. Collection, Dolores Olmedo.



NOTE: This article was originally written in 1987.

¹This three-part schema is derived from Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time," as summarized by Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London & New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 12.

²*Specular* (*specularized*, *specularity*) is a key word used extensively by the French psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray to describe the mechanism whereby the instrument (the speculum) that man uses to see and represent woman is a mirror in which he sees only his own reflection (a "return to the same"). "[Woman is] a mirror in which the 'subject' sees himself and reproduces himself in his reflection." This quote is from Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated from the French by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) p. 240. With its echoing of words such as *spectator* and *speculation*, it is a very useful term in feminist theory.

³Irigaray, p. 124.

⁴Irigaray, p. 47.

⁵Moi, p. 57.

⁶Irigaray, "Ce Sexe qui n'est pas un" ["This Sex Which Is Not One"], *New French Feminism—An Anthology*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 103; Mary Shelley, quoted by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 96.

⁷Gilbert and Gubar, p. 98.

⁸Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 167.

⁹Irigaray, *Le Corps à corps avec la mère* (Montreal: Les Editions de la Pleine Lune, 1981), p. 86, my translation.

¹⁰Irigaray, quoted by Moi, p. 147.

¹¹Moi, p. 139.

¹²Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 33.

¹³Naomi Schor, "This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray," lecture for *Our Academic Contract*, University of Alabama symposium, October 1987.

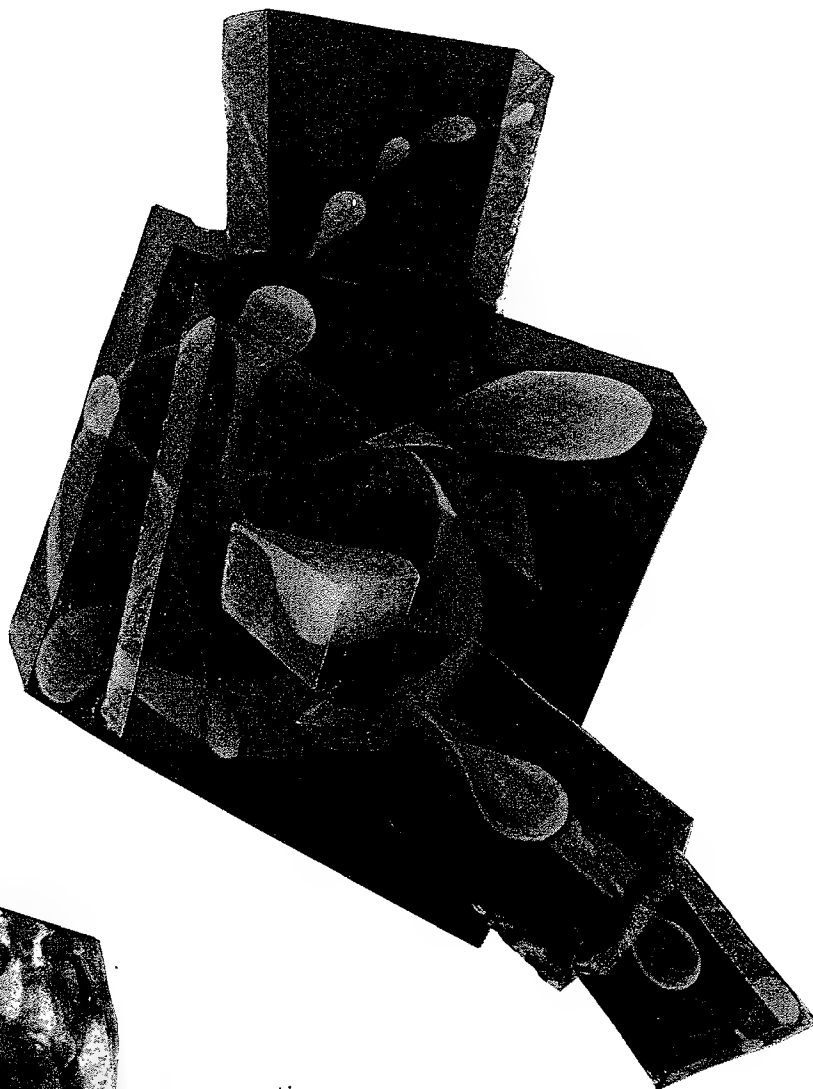


PHOTO: ANDREW MOORE

Above:

ELIZABETH MURRAY *Wild Life*, 1986, oil on six canvases, 62" x 81" x 21". Collection of Douglas S. Cramer Foundation, Los Angeles. Courtesy, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Left:

LOUISE BOURGEOIS *Nature Study*, 1984, version II (cast 1988), bronze with polished patina, 30" x 19" x 15". Courtesy, Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

¹⁴Quoted by Eleonore Heartney, *Art News* (Summer 1987), p. 140.

¹⁵Cynthia Ozick, *Art & Ardor* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984), p. 177.

¹⁶Donald Kuspit, "Dorothea Tanning's Occult Drawings," *Art Criticism*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 47.

¹⁷Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 50.

Mira Schor, a painter living in New York, is co-editor of *M/E/I/A/N/I/N/G*, a journal of contemporary art.

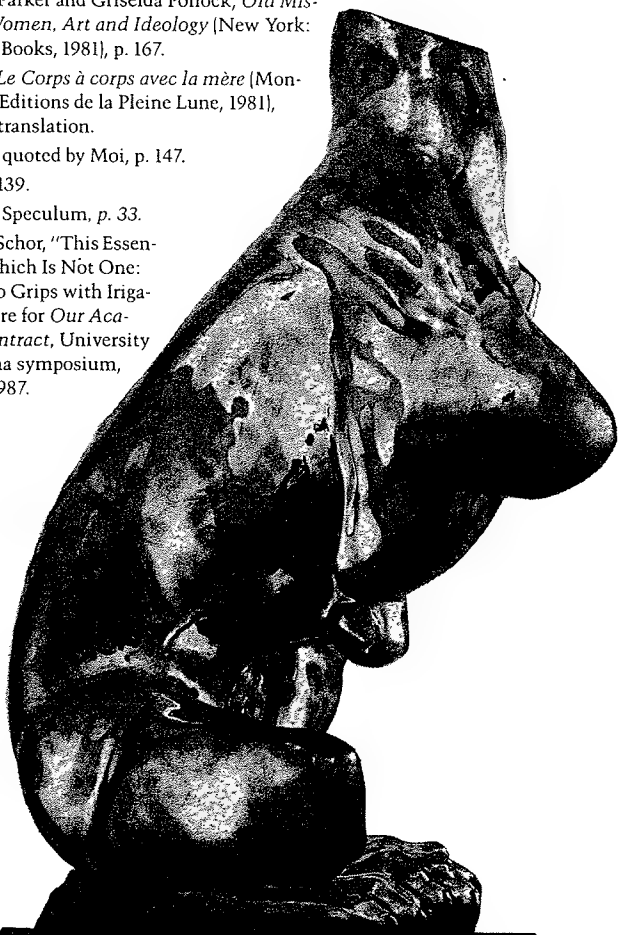


PHOTO: ALLAN FINKELMAN

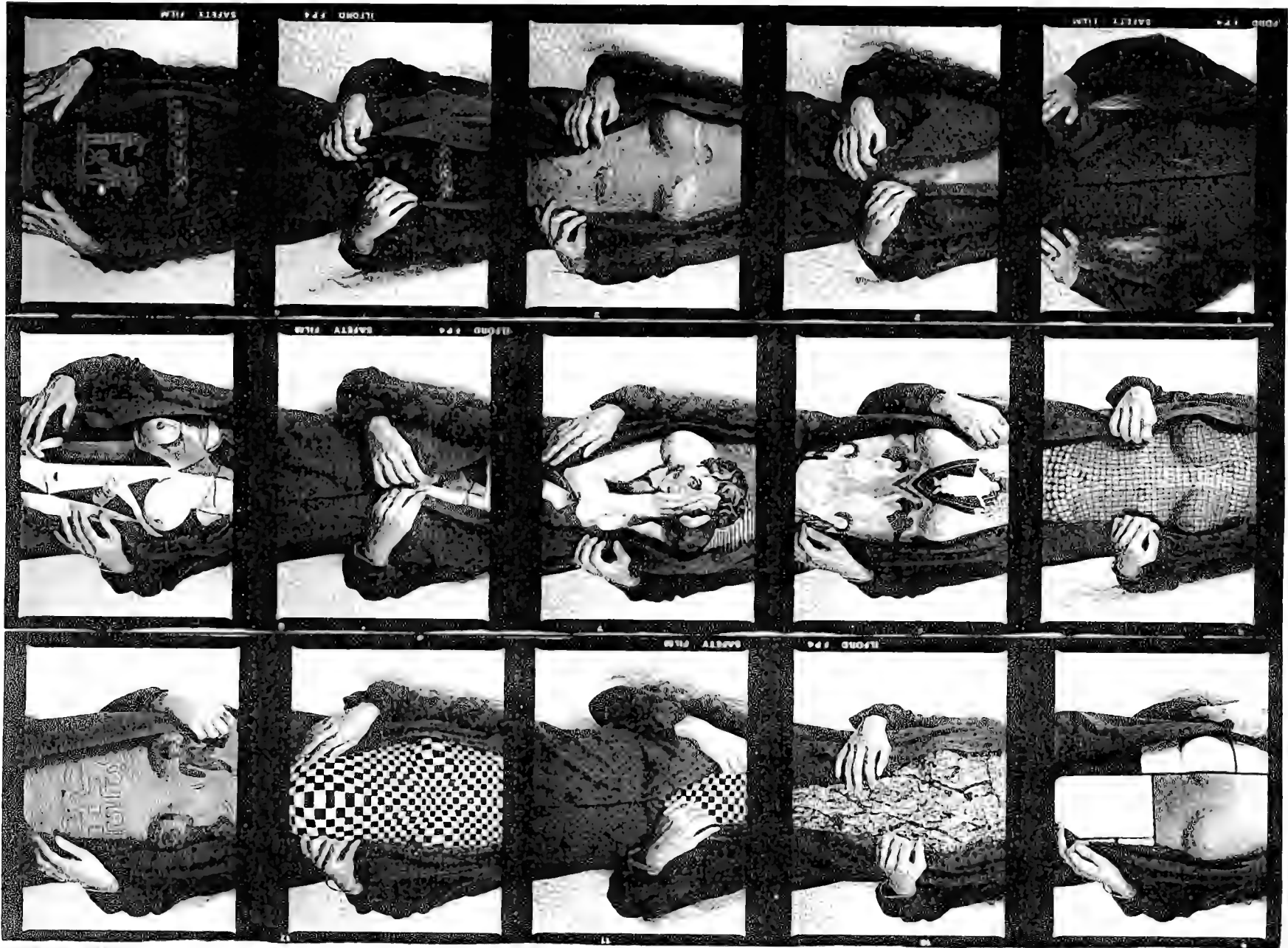


PHOTO: BLAKE TROYA

VIRGINIA MADSEN *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* The photo of Madsen in the first row is a sculpture who makes art about social and political issues.

NEGOTIATING THE FEMINIST DIVIDE



Whitney Chadwick

Woman, then, stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.

—Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"¹

First published in 1975, Laura Mulvey's germinal essay located the image of woman as the site of the struggle over "meaning" in art. Who speaks? And to whom? Who is silenced? By whom? Fourteen years later feminism in the arts has broken into increasingly, sometimes absurdly, polarized groupings: feminism/postfeminism, feminism/theoretical feminism, essentialism/poststructuralism, feminist practice/poststructuralist theory, feminist analysis/gender studies. Among feminists themselves the issue of woman—as artist and as image—increasingly occupies a contested space, and it is by focusing on this issue that we can perhaps begin to question the political implications of the new divide between theory and practice.

It is ironic that shortly after feminism legitimized the unique experiences of women, experience *itself* as a way to understand the world and one's place in it has come under attack. One can't help but see significant and ominous parallels with the history of women and academic art in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a time when, just as the academies finally began admitting women, male artists decamped and new, bohemian social and artistic ideals began to dominate. As a feminist art historian now writing a book that deals with a series of historical issues having to do with the intersection of production by women and representation of women,² I am struck both by how far we have traveled since the early 1970s, and how con-

flicted many of us feel about the current disjunction between feminist practice and poststructuralist theory, or between modernist views of artistic innovation and postmodernist rejections of originality, or between the production of gender relations and the processes of making art. Stepping into the divide between essentialism and poststructuralist theory is a way of raising a few of the issues that confront all of us working as feminists in the arts today. I want to emphasize that there is no inherently "correct" feminist art and art criticism, but there are ways of using what feminism has taught us to produce art and criticism, which can take their place among the varied strategies through which we understand the production of meaning today.

Feminism in the arts grew out of the contemporary women's movement of the early 1970s; its first investigations relied heavily on sociological and political methodology. Early feminist analyses focused new attention on the work of remarkable women artists and on unsurpassed traditions of domestic and utilitarian production by women. These analyses uncovered a history of productive women artists long overlooked, misunderstood, and neglected by art historians. They revealed the ways that women and their productions have been presented in a negative relation to creativity and high culture. It is now a tenet of feminist analysis that the esthetic value of painting and sculpture is often defined in opposition to qualities such as "decorative," "precious," "miniature," "sentimental," etc. Those very qualities which are used to construct a social ideal of "femininity" are also employed to denigrate its productions. Presented as outside culture and history, women and their art have provided a set of negative characteristics against which to oppose "high" art. Economically, legally, and politically powerless through much of West-

ern history, women have been linked to nature and the unknowable through metaphors of the body while the masculine has signified culture and mental activity.

As the inadequacies of methodologies based on the ideological and political conviction that women were more unified by the fact of being female than divided by the specifics of race, class, and historical moment were exposed, many feminists began to turn to structuralism, psychoanalysis, and semiology for theoretical models. As feminist teaching programs in the arts have closed or moved outside the university in recent years, often in response to economic and political changes in society, and as many women artists have sought support and community in the professional art world rather than in the academy, earlier alliances between feminist artists, critics, and historians appear to have broken down. The multiple discourses that make up poststructuralism today challenge the humanist notion of a unified, rational, and autonomous subject, which has dominated study in the arts and humanities since the Renaissance. Yet much art by women, many of them encouraged to speak out for the first time during the early, heady years of the women's movement, remains rooted in a search for authentic modes of expression that are centered in the experience of the body.

For many women, authenticity of artistic expression and the experience of being female were inextricably bound to-

gether. A belief in essentialism, or a true biological femaleness, most convincingly theorized by Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, and Susan Griffin, motivated much art by American women during the 1970s. Primarily ahistorical, and outside of race or class analysis, essentialism offered fixed ideas about the "nature" of women. These ideas were often reduced to a set of characteristics or a form language—layered, tactile, "central core," etc.—and

finned only in relation to what was understood as male at a specific time.³ This paradox, and the difficulty of stripping art by women from social constructions of gender, is central to Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock's "deconstruction" of femininity in *Old Mistresses*.⁴

Our ways of evaluating art remain shaped by patriarchal ideologies, which prevent us from arriving at a moment

though essentialists have equated the feminine with the unconscious and the prelinguistic, the art that results from this position still has to be understood as involved in the broader cultural production of meaning. Yet, if essentialism has come to be seen as naive by some academic feminist critics and historians, poststructuralist theory appears to many women artists to be little more than another misogynist denial of their voices. (In Alexis Hunter's 1982 painting *Considering Theory*, an enraged Eve bites the snake's tail with ferocious force.)

All forms of poststructuralism—the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Emile Benveniste, the Marxist analysis of Louis Althusser, the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, the theories of discourse and power associated with Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence—assume that subjectivity is produced through a whole range of discursive practices (economic, social, political) and that meaning is not determined or guaranteed by author or artist. Poststructuralist theories have worked to deny the authenticity of individual experience by decentering both the rational, autonomous subject of liberal humanism and the essential female nature advocated by many radical feminists. Instead, subjectivity is seen as socially constructed within language. Language becomes the common factor in analyses of social organizations, social meanings, uses of power, and individual consciousness.⁵

Poststructuralism has deeply influenced a wide range of recent artistic practices. Originating in structural linguistics and the analysis of literary texts, poststructuralism has been applied to visual images as a means of unraveling the ways that images confirm or interrupt dominant contemporary ideologies, such as gender, power, and patronage. Derived from complex, primarily European, intellectual traditions, poststructuralism remains centered in the university, answerable neither to the realities of studio practice nor to women's need to transform patriarchy through political action. Often viewed as denying the authenticity of individual experience, while reinforcing the goals of academic feminist intellectuals, poststructuralist theory has become the primary means of defining a new avant-garde in the arts. Weighting text over image, and theory over practice, it has provided developmental models against which issues of content can be measured.

At the same time, the writings of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kris-

“Above all, we need to be cautious of tendencies that polarize intellect and feeling.”

used to validate empirical data rooted in women's experiences of life under patriarchy. Women artists turned to menstrual blood, vaginal images, feminine body language, pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity to offer aspects of female sexuality, which are largely repressed in the history of male art. In the end, however, after proposing new subjects and compiling an inventory of features characteristic of art produced by women (and eliminating all those evident in the work of male artists), it was not clear that we had arrived at anything essentially feminine. More likely, we had simply established a new notion of historically defined *difference*; the genuinely feminine was de-

of truth that would allow us to conclude that an image or a process is innately female. Because we live in a culture that has deeply internalized the codes through which we understand visual representations of the female body, it is hard to shake that body image loose from the conventions that structure its meaning in Western culture. The feminist iconography of the body often tells us less about essential experiences of being female than about how patriarchy has mapped and controlled the female body and used it as an object of exchange between men. We have seen images made by women in celebration of the female body read as pornography by some male viewers. Instances of the censorship and destruction of nude images made by women have highlighted the difficulty of producing positive images of the human form in a culture that has no tradition of erotic art and in which the nude female has traditionally served as an object of exchange. Yet refusing to represent the female body and female sexuality, as some feminist critics have advocated, eliminates the possibility of addressing important issues of women's sexual pleasure.

Essentialism has been viewed by its critics as serving to confirm the positioning of woman in patriarchal society—as unconscious force, as nature, as mystery. Since its biological orientation prevents those who adhere to it from engaging with the problems and power relations of everyday life, it has remained a discourse without the social and institutional power to effect change. Al-

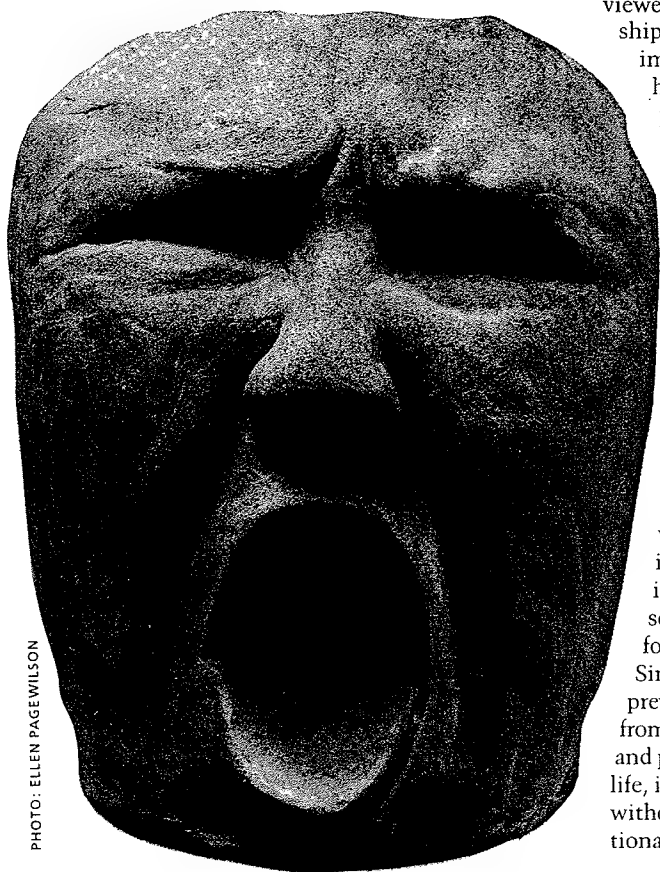


PHOTO: ELLEN PAGE WILSON

teva, and other contemporary French theorists interested in female authorship, pose the issue of woman's "otherness" from radically different bodily perspectives. Kristeva's semiotic proposes a denial of the body *in order to speak*; Irigaray and Cixous demand that we locate the feminine in the unconscious and introduce the body into art as a way of disrupting a restrictive phallogentric control of language. Both positions have proved problematic for American women artists. For Cixous, feminine writing means "writing the body"; yet her demand that we enter and "explore the dark continent" has been too closely aligned with the psychoanalytic orientation of French theory to have attracted many American converts among artists. The originators of the discourse about *écriture féminine* have demonstrated a brilliant understanding of the dangers of a reductive essentialism on the one hand, and the limitations of current psychoanalytic ideologies on the other. Yet the traditions of *sentiment* and bodily sensation that originated in eighteenth-century France and that familiarize their views for European feminists have no real parallel in American culture. The stress on writing in French theory, its adherence to the principles of structural linguistics, and its rejection of the empiricism and pragmatism that underlie American feminism have limited its appeal for many American artists.⁶

As poststructuralist theory has moved from academic contexts into public consciousness, it has become one of many reflections of the forces shaping contemporary culture. I don't believe that any of us can, or should, retreat from its challenges. Nor do I believe that artists must read Derrida or, worse, struggle through Lacan's tortured prose. As feminists we need to be aware of theoretical models that can help us understand the positioning of women in Western culture, and we need to find new ways of using language to confront and deconstruct dominant assumptions and hierarchies. At the same time we need to be constantly alert to the political and artistic implications of discourses that circumvent or ignore the real conditions of artistic production and often fail to address issues of social context, particular interests, and changing power relations. Above all, we need to be cautious of tendencies that polarize intellect and feeling, thus reiterating the mind/body duality of Western culture with its delineation of intellectual activity as masculine and "nurture" as feminine. Artist May Stevens has called for "a balancing act"; "Theory

cuts off its roots, loses its connection to reality when it ignores feeling; feeling needs structuring, a means of evaluating between conflicting feelings."⁷

One of the functions of a feminist art history has become the exploration of ways in which visual representations construct certain images of women and ideas of femininity, which are then "naturalized" through ideology. Although most feminist art historians working today are convinced that there is no essential femininity, no linked lineage of women artists that transcends historical specificity, there is little agreement about how to proceed from that point. We now have an important tradition of writings about art that express aspects of women's experience in the world, which are not shared by men, and about works of art as examples of how class and gender are constructed and reinforced through representation. Much less has been written about the intersection between production by women and representations of women or about attempts by women artists to negotiate a new understanding of subjectivity based on feminine knowledge and desire.

The focus of much recent writing about women and art seems to have shifted from production of representation as recent theoretical developments have focused attention on textual issues. But language, whether verbal or visual, is inflected by specific historical conditions; often it is the artist, not the intellectual, who can most quickly embody ideological contradictions and force a meeting between intellect and feeling. It remains for women artists to negotiate new relationships to the noncolonized body and to find ways of speaking the *difference* of femininity, which is not bound to negation and otherness. We need a feminist art that retains its ability to affect the institutions of power by refusing to ignore issues of race, class, sex, and age; and a feminist criticism/history that can continue to respond to and theorize a feminist art, which is accessible to and pleasurable for women.

¹Screen 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18.

²Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

³The issue of essentialism is the subject of Gisela Ecker's introduction to *Feminist Aesthetics*, trans. H. Anderson (London: Women's Press, 1985), pp. 15-22.

⁴Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁵The best current introduction to these issues is Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁶Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London/New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 102-167.

⁷May Stevens, "Taking Art to the Revolution," *Heresies* no. 9 (1980).

Whitney Chadwick is an art historian who writes on surrealism, contemporary art, and feminism. Her books include *Myth and Surrealist Painting, 1929-1939*; *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*; and *Women, Art and Society*.



NANCY FRIED: *The Nightmare* (front, left page, and back, this page), 1987, terra cotta, 7 1/2" x 8 1/4" x 8 1/4"
Courtesy Graham Modern, New York.

Nancy Fried lives in New York and shows her work at Graham Modern gallery.

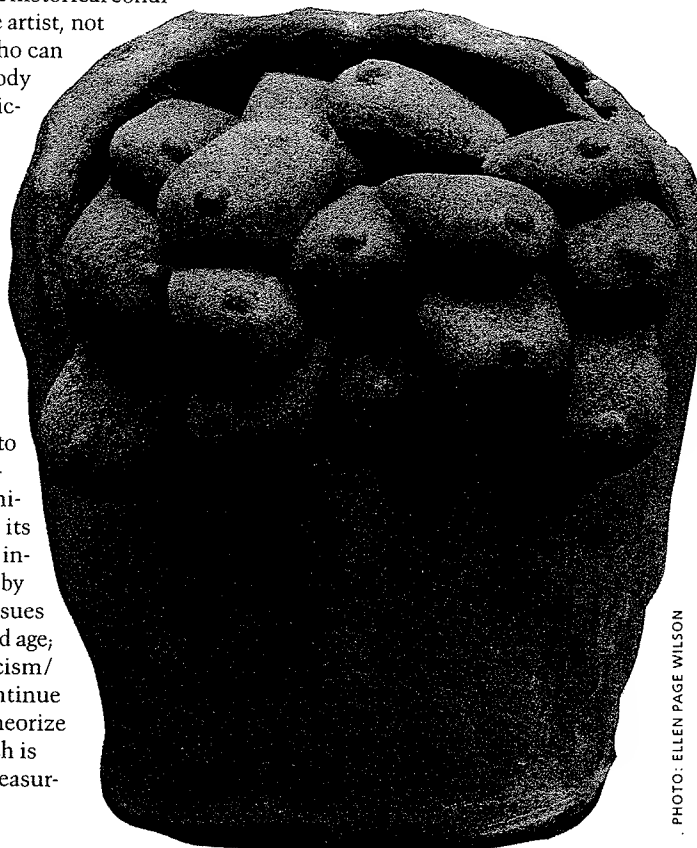
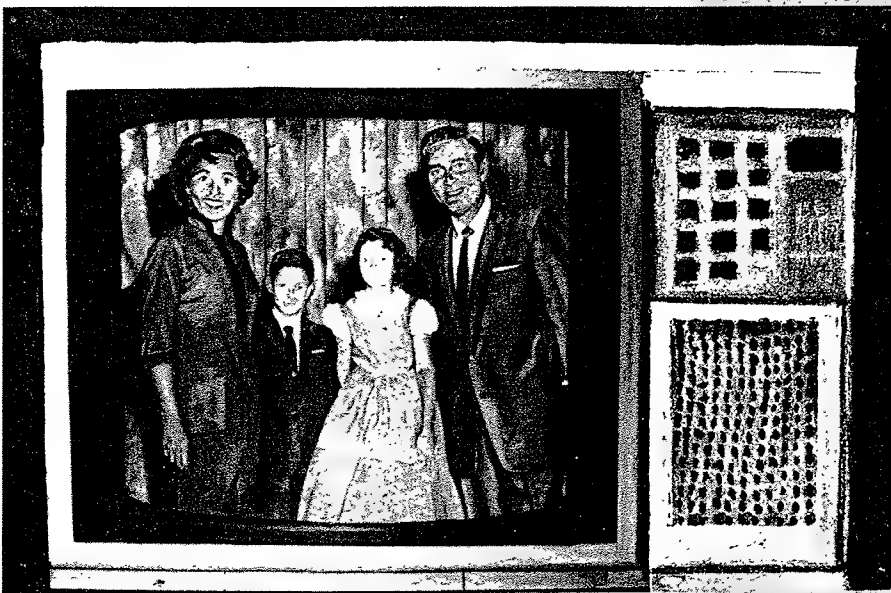


PHOTO: ELLEN PAGE WILSON

FEMINIST ART IS AN OPENING QUESTION.

Arlene Raven

Arlene Raven



Brahna Yassky

Susan Bee



Susanne Mueller

* Feminist Art is whatever
we want it to be.

Susanne Mueller Oct. 83

WHAT IS FEMINIST ART?

Selected postcard replies to a central question of this issue.



"the painted - the painter -" **Steckel**
Anita Steckel



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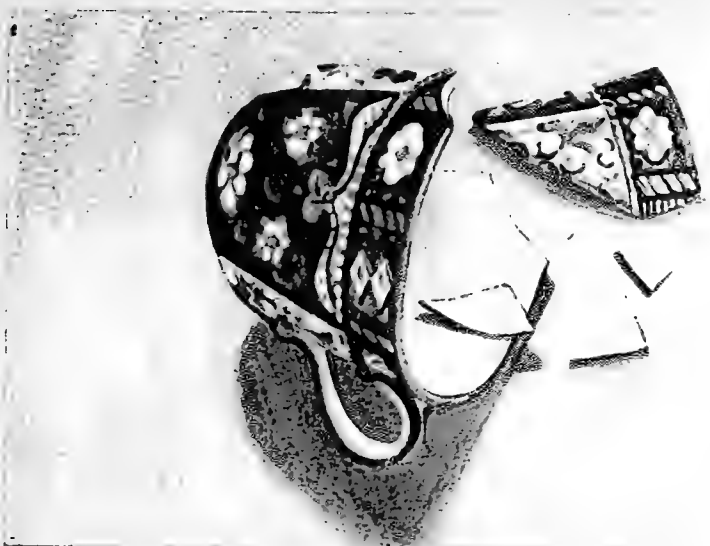
- *THE FEMINIST ART MOVEMENT WAS FOUNDED IN 1965 BY CLEMENT GREENBERG.
- *IMPORTANT FEMINIST ART IS ABOUT MEETING MEN.
- *SINCE THERE ARE NO WOMEN POLITICIANS, FEMINIST ART CANNOT BE ABOUT POLITICS.
- *VISIT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART'S PERMANENT FEMINIST ART COLLECTION!
- *FEMINIST ARTISTS DO NOT USE MACHINES BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY WORK.
- *IT ISN'T FEMINIST ART UNLESS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED - 1.A USED TAMPEX 2.A VULVA SHAPED OBJECT 3.A BALLET OUTFIT.
- *FEMINIST ART IS PINK.

BAD INFORMATION BOX 2340 2140 SHATTUCK
BERKELEY CA 94704 J.P. MALLOY, PRES.

Judy Malloy

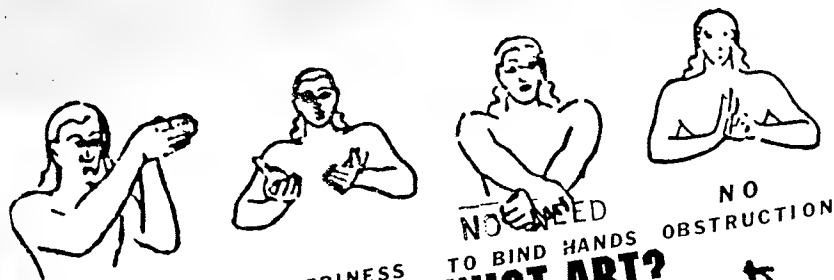
WE ARE MORE
ALIKE THAN
DIFFERENT
ALIKE THAN

Edith Isaac Rose



Robin Tewes

Judy Malloy



WHAT IS FEMINIST ART?



Sonya Rapoport
DIGITAL MUDRA

Sonya Rapoport

FEMINIST ART COCO GORDON

A FINE STAMEN.
IN MEAT, FAT, ATTIRE, MINT IT RATES
ITS SIN RAINS.
IN TIME-- FEAR FATE.
KANS SNEAR IF IT A PART MEANT SENT
MARS. REMIT IT.
IN TRAPE IN STRIFE IN TRIST,
A MINISTER.
ITS PAIT SPOT P.R.
SEMINAR.
IS (IN)FIMITE.
SEAR-TIS, TINS, TART, MART, A
STATE.
LES FIST PAIR LEE.
DEAT AT STREAM "TINER" LEE.
A SPARE, A STAIR, A FIT.
A NEST, A RIFT, A START.
ITS PAN ITS PAIR.
IDS AIM IDS (IN)TIME.
IT IS. IT IS IN. IT IS IF. IS AL.
TET REMTS TRIN.
ISNT RIF RAP ISNT TIT "FER"TA
ISNT SERP. ISNT NEAT. ISNT FRANE.
REMAINS IN "FIRMENT".
REFRAIN: A FIRST.

(It is its own definition,
taken from its own
spelling F E M I N I S T A R T)

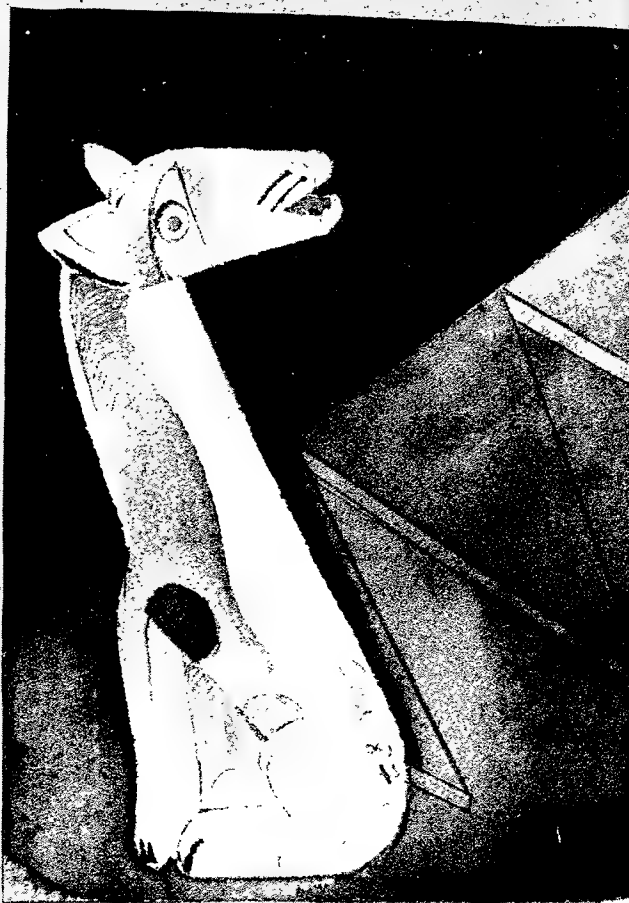
Coco Gordon

What is feminist art?

Feminist art has the quality of seeming to begin from an understanding of women's condition as women, and in it, either (1) some basic women's truths get exposure, (2) male-female norms are exploded, (3) women get a noticeably better-than-usual place in the scheme of things, (4) the inequities of our usual place are clearly shown, (5) our history is recognized or celebrated without idealization, or (6) the materials and artifacts of our traditional manufacture or daily use are invoked, transformed, or repossessed by choice.

Avis Lang

Avis Lang



Don't Look Back

Pat Steir

Ora Lerman

BOTH SIDES NOW

[A Reprise]

Lucy R. Lippard

It makes perfectly good sense that after twenty years, feminist art is a braid of multiple positions. But in fact, it's not multiple enough. Listen to Audre Lorde:

I've been talking about racism in the feminist movement for how many years! I think that to the extent that the white American women's movement does not take racism as an endemic, integral problem within the movement, to that extent it will fall apart. . . . I just came back from Germany and it was so obvious that if the white German women's movement doesn't take anti-semitism and racism as an integral part of their concerns, they will also fail. Whatever the core problems of any society are, they must also be the core problems of the women's movement, because we are part of society and we reflect those things for good and ill. . . . Racism is a problem of white America and ultimately that's where it's going to have to be solved. Because more and more, as I say when I talk to Black student groups, we must move on—with or without white people, we'll have to move on. White women of good intent must work within their own communities first of all. It's not that we don't come together, it's not that we don't share interests, it's that basically we need to work with ourselves before we can come together as wholes, not as pieces of people.

"Both Sides Now" was the title of a show I organized a decade ago to reconcile cultural and socialist feminisms. This reprise considers two newer strategies fighting it out for a center that is not even ours to control, a center that continues to ignore the peripheries. Now we have the "essentialists" versus the "deconstructivists" or old-fashioned versus postmodern feminists, a confrontation that has too often been simplistically boiled down to practice versus theory, as in the early days of this wave of feminism. (I have an Australian poster from the '70s in which Wonder Woman swoops

down on her opponents yelling, "Pure Theory equals pure shit! Egghead feminists and other useless theorists, Get Fucked!" "Where do correct ideas come from?" she asks. "Do they drop from the Skies? [a brick with "Althusser" written on it] No! Are they innate in the mind? No! They come from Social Practice!")

Today the essentialists at their most extreme dismiss all theory and unfamiliar vocabularies as obfuscatory, oppressive, and male; the deconstructivists at their most extreme dismiss both spiritual feminism and activist feminism as male-imposed, exclusively socially constructed, and just plain deluded. Each in its way ignores the best of the feminist movement, which is our ability to embrace contradiction and understand it, or at least cope with it, without collapsing all the differences into liberal wishy-washiness. As Jane Gallop says, "this problem of dealing with difference without constituting an opposition may just be what feminism is all about." So can't we analyze social formation and envision social transformation at the same time? Must we throw the body out with the bathwater?

Difference is what it's all about, but not just gender difference. We rarely apply our insights on representation and stereotypes to women outside the (global) white minority; artists of color are just beginning to be included in articles and exhibitions on "differences" and gender. Socialist feminism has long insisted on the incorporation of race and class into feminist theory, but along the way there has been a kind of competition between gender and race/class. Socialists have accused radical and cultural feminists of bourgeois romanticized elitism and of supporting all women regardless of their politics (the Margaret Thatcher/Indira Gandhi syndrome). The opposition has

insisted that women's struggles are always put on the back burner in favor of (at least) lip service to race and class, that Marxism is incompatible with feminism and that all models of women in power, no matter how abusive, must be supported. Both positions are right on various levels but over the years the debate has rarely progressed beyond this basic argument.

A lot of differences between essentialism and deconstructivism today are found in methodology, context, and language rather than in basic belief. Nobody is arguing against the notion that woman as sign is the site of our commodification. Still, I was disturbed by a feminist panel at the New Museum in 1987 which seemed to be digging the trenches deeper rather than producing dialogue. Its publicity pitted "the Goddess" (represented by empirical artists who have often been activists rather than by the spiritual feminists who lay most claim to Her) against "social practice" (represented by European-oriented postmodernist critics whose idea of social practice is almost entirely based in theory). Two Derridaesque statements in particular from the latter camp provoked me. Rosalyn Deutsche said flatly, "There is no experience of the body outside of representation." Kate Linker said, "It is only through images of women that female sexuality is constructed." Both writers have made important contributions to recent feminism and I have no quarrel with most of their positions; the argu-

ments that follow are aimed at the implied narrowness and exclusivity that endanger their potential to feminism.

In the mid-1970s, we talked a lot about the dangers of being preoccupied and thus ruled by our opposition. This problem still seems inherent in the fascination of much postmodernist theory or "critical practice" with that which is being criticized, or deconstructed—capitalism, the patriarchy, the media, lifestyles of the rich and famous. Clearly we can't be ignorant of what They are doing

bulwark of feminist art since 1970. "Foregrounding" this project is one thing; isolating it is another. Too often I find a kind of fatalism—even self-hatred—in deconstructivist positions like those expressed above. If we have no experience that is not formed by the patriarchy, from what base can we even imagine our own transformations? And if language is so formative in social construction, why does most postmodern feminist theory adopt the impenetrable "discourse" of the patriarchy to overturn it? Why look

is not dumb; it includes thought. Analysis is made on the basis of experience and, ideally, leads to action, which in turn can lead to a changed experience from which a new analysis can be born, and so forth. Analysis can *also* end up in an academic cul de sac, so distanced from experience that it no longer means anything to anyone except those specialists who live within their own self-erected domains—just like the patriarchy does. Some of us "old-fashioned feminists" are reluctant to see the whole bundle of reclamation and celebration tossed out in favor of a new line that often seems unduly harsh and narrow—downright *un-generous*, despite its intellectual appeal.

I know other women from the first generation of this round of feminism who began their feminist artwork some 20 years ago and are also feeling rather buffeted by the inevitable but often constructive changes since then. (In fact it is artists like May Stevens, Ida Applebroog, and Nancy Spero, among others, who are making work with the most to offer to both camps.) We've lived through the exhilaration and rage of the early '70s to the generalized backlash of the mid-'70s (backlash from the dominant culture, the art world, and other women), to the so-called postfeminism of the early '80s, to the present, where feminist theory is influenced by Europeans both male and female—Freud, Lacan, Cixous, Kristeva—who, incidentally, echo the main focus of British left feminists from the mid-'70s.

Significantly, these new theories emerge from media analysis, especially film criticism. Laura Mulvey, whose hugely influential "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was written in 1974, wrote in retrospect a decade later that this essay belonged "properly to the early confrontational moments of a movement. The great problem is then to see how to move from a deconstructive mode of thought to 'something new,' from creative confrontation to creativity." Mary Kelly, an American artist who has lived in London some 20 years, and along with Mulvey has been a persuasive spokeswoman for the deconstructivist or "critical" position, has long argued "against the supposed self-sufficiency of lived experience and for a theoretical elaboration of the social relations in which 'femininity' is formed." But Kelly's own art is important because it does not *deny* lived experience; she uses it to ground her theoretical investigations and the combination forms her art. Unlike some contemporary art, Kelly's work does not *become* the social mechanisms that it criticizes. As Jill Dolan has observed, feminists

"I am convinced that there are experiences I share only with other women."

to us, or even what They are doing when they are not apparently doing anything to us, and even when They seem to be doing something for us (as in some overtly conservative postmodernist theories of art that seem bent on co-opting feminism as a not-quite-political stance). But at what point are we simply swallowing that which we can't afford to digest, and getting a terrible bellyache in the process?

Feminists are generally agreed that language and visual representation of women mediate much of our experience, even in societies where the mass media is less ubiquitous than in our own. Analysis of the socially imposed and debilitating image of woman and its effect on our lives and our sexuality has been a

at everything through the notion of a castration complex that is so clearly a male construct too? Why not duck out from under that regimenting scrutiny? Why not concentrate on what the male gaze cannot see?

I am convinced that there are experiences I share only with other women. My experience cannot be *fully* regulated, controlled, or interpreted by bodies and minds that do not know it. There are some aspects of femaleness (if not of femininity) that simply escape men. They provide the firm ground, the grass roots, from which women can analyze and act. Some elements of difference we have chosen for ourselves; others are the common experience of the oppressed. Experience

ERIKA ROTHENBERG *Is God Punishing Us?*, 1987–88, acrylic on canvas, 40" × 54".
Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York. Erika Rothenberg, currently based in California, shows at P.P.O.W. in New York.

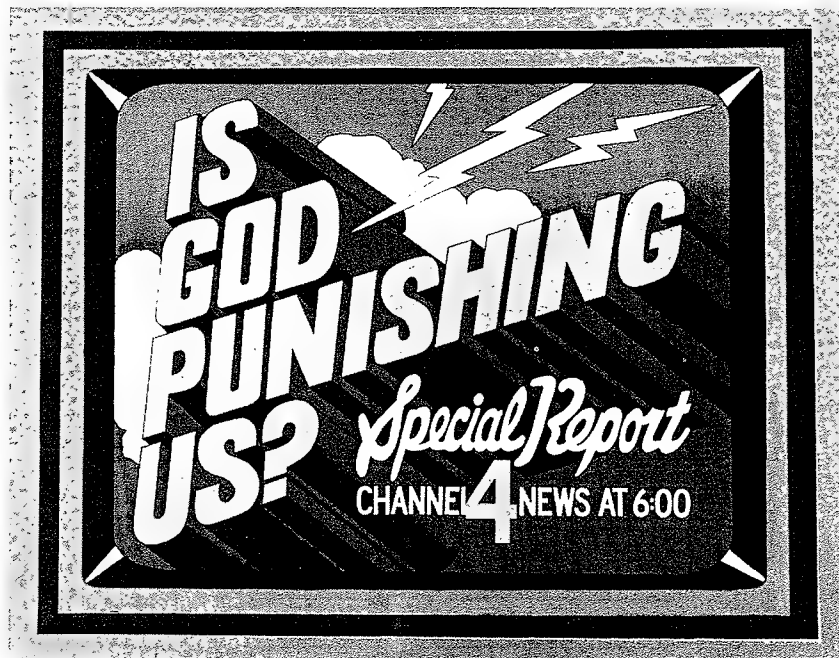


PHOTO: ADAM REICH



PHOTO: ADAM REICH

ILONA GRANET *Curb Your Animal Instinct*, 1986, silkscreen enamel on metal, 24" x 26". Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York, Ilona Granet asks, "Why didn't Malcolm Forbes invite me to his birthday party? It's my birthday too."

"have become so enthralled with the possibilities of the theory, we have forgotten to point out that in practice, the post-modern esthetic fails to realize anything close to a feminist agenda."

About a decade ago, I wrote that to reject all aspects of woman's experience as dangerous stereotypes often meant simultaneous rejection of some of the more valuable aspects of our female identities. Though easily used against us now, the disappearance of female identification with the earth, with nurturance, with peace (and more problematically with motherhood), would serve the dominant culture all too well. One of the many reasons so many women artists have engaged so effectively in social change and/or outreach art is our political identification with oppressed and disenfranchised people. We don't have to approve the historical reasons for that identification, but we do need to wonder why we are so often discouraged from thinking about them.

Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding, rejecting a liberal generalization of all women's experiences as complicitous with the status quo, points out that if differences between genders are crucial, aren't race and class equally so? These "other" differences are not parallel with gender, they are part of it, constituting another kind of difference within gender that is potentially a great positive resource. "We can't share each other's experi-

ences," said Harding in a recent lecture, "but we can share the politics" that arise from different experiences. Diversity is something more complex and important than the "great Disneyland of ethnicity" preferred by liberals. Neither gender nor race should be isolated within politics, nor should race be flattened out as just another internal conflict between groups of white middle-class feminists.

As a socialist feminist (albeit an occasionally emotional, romantic one), I've always had trouble with the notion that women are inherently better than men; as a cultural feminist (albeit a quasi-Marxist one), I have always liked the way women go about life better than the way men do. I can look back at the ideas we had about "female sensibility" in the early '70s and feel a certain nostalgia for the sense they made at the time. I still can't completely disavow these ideas today, because women and men still have totally different experiences in this world, biologically, socially, politically, and sexually. At the same time the deconstructive strategy (in use before it was named) is one effective way to gain our balance within the dizzying array of identities that are offered us. Although I'm personally not well enough read (and too red) to be a bona fide deconstructivist, I can work to peel away the intimidating jargon and discover the valuable parts of the feminist puzzle buried in these theories.

Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Matthews, in their "Feminist Critique of Art History" (*Art Bulletin*, September 1987) suggest that the first generation of recent feminists has a "fixed" notion of the female sensibility, while the second generation has an "unfixed" concept that attacks the accretions of patriarchal construction from all sides. This may, however, be somewhat unfair to those early days. It's true that we *fixed on* those aspects of femaleness that had been buried, that made us feel good, as principles of unity. But such rediscovered celebratory concepts weren't static; on the contrary, we could see and feel the changes happening in ourselves. A very real flux, and flexibility, proved to us that there was some hope of remaking ourselves, our images, and the world—even uphill against the inevitable social dominance. We acknowledged that our notion of a female sensibility was in part socially constructed, but we felt that we had also constructed it ourselves by inverting the stereotypes, by reclaiming the positive and disclaiming the negative. An idealist approach, sure. Sometimes idealism is necessary, and works.

Today we're all more sophisticated, and resigned to a longer, deeper struggle than we'd expected in the very beginning. My own choice has been to spend my time on images of the world by women rather than on images of women by the world; I like to work in what Abigail Solomon-Godeau has called "the elusive and unknowable register of the real." So I'm grateful to those who are painstakingly dissecting the stereotypes and examining the mechanisms, even when they lose me intellectually. At the same time a little balance, please. The total rejection of the spiritual by some deconstructivists and some socialists disturbs me. I don't happen to "believe in" a goddess any more than I believe in a god. But it's not merely a matter, as Deutsche disparagingly put it at the New Museum panel, of "the obsolete need to return to a simpler time." That *need* is not necessarily obsolete, no matter how unrealistic it may seem. And as Arlene Raven pointed out that same night, the goddess in eco-feminism "stands for a larger development." Sometimes it is a matter (so

to speak) of incorporating empowering ideas from the past into current struggles, undistorted by a false nostalgia and exaggerated romanticism, or by New Age apolitical elitisms and wishful thinking (as in "create your own reality"—a marvelous idea and impetus that is constantly abused). "Spiritual" to me means not only the "kinship among women" that Suzanne Lacy exhorts, but a sense of the ungended possibilities of a far wider psychic field than conventional disciplines can cope with. But that's another

story, even harder to integrate into global feminism than the essential and the postmodern.

Some postmodern theory challenges the frequent oversimplification of some essentialists, who verge dangerously on biological superiority built on the sand of biological determinism. But if essentialism is accused of idealism, optimism, and naiveté, surely the alternative is not to banish these not-altogether-despicable elements in favor of an apolitical defeatism. And if essentialists are accused of

one kind of fetishism, deconstructivists must admit to a linguistic fetishism in which the sacred sign, signifier, and text overwhelm much of what's before our very eyes and under our very fingers.

A feminist theory that does not recognize an activist wing, or at least an activist potential, is inadequate and unsatisfying. I fear the 100% sensuous, sentimental anti-intellectualism that is the worst of essentialism, and I fear the 100% academized intellectualism that is the worst of postmodernism. One lacks the distance that is necessary to see the world from different viewpoints; the other has overdone the "distancing" device we learned from Brecht. Both seem dangerously based in Eurocentrism—elegant French/Italian analyses or pragmatic British/American criticism. And both have been victims of the trickle-down conservatism of the unlamented Reagan era. For all the talk within postmodernism of a "resistant" or "transgressive" esthetic, the overwhelming emphasis on objectification, commodity, production, and consumption finally blurs the peripheries, where I like to hang out. Objectified women are swept up with all objects (including art objects) as merely socialized signs of our unworthiness. In the process, oppositional art gets mellowed down into "critical practice"—perhaps because, as Fredric Jameson remarks, "you can't really have a cultural politics without a politics." And it's true that North American culture at its most activist still functions mainly as a consciousness raiser . . . and raider.

That's not so bad. On the other side of the coin, much so-called critical art is just as chewed and predigested and predictable as much art on the left. Once life is reduced to images and spectacles for a passive audience, the image becomes the locus of evil, and one forgets that real actors are acting behind and in front of the scenes. The "homeopathic" remedy suggested years ago for art by Hans Haacke is recommended today by Jameson for the postmodern dilemma, as "the idea that you have to go all the way through this and come out on the other side." But if all our energy is spent "engaging the frame" and the "discourse" of the dominant culture, who's going to be out there experimenting with alternatives, and listening to those who are



MARINA GUTIERREZ *Race*, 1986, pencil on paper, 8" x 5". From *150 Artists' Book*, Connections Project/Conexus. Marina Gutiérrez, born 1954, lives and works in New York. In addition to making art, she teaches and directs an art program for teenagers.

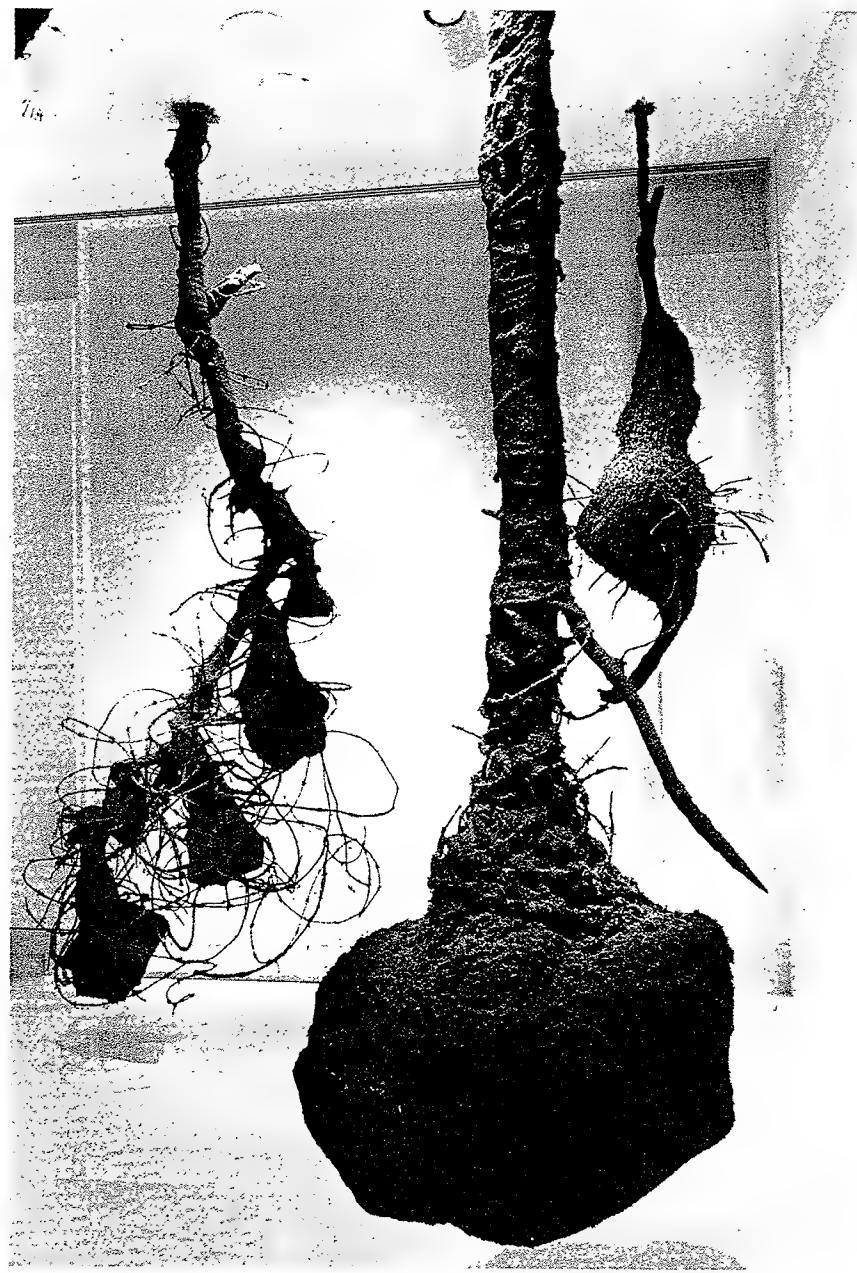
voluntarily or involuntarily hanging out on the margins?

Victor Burgin and others say that critical practices must operate from the center of the system they question, or be ineffective. Yet sometimes valuable ideas belong outside the plaza, on the rooftops where the snipers wait—feminism being a prime example—and I'm not sure they have to be domesticated to be effective. Currently, dissent is sporadically welcome in the center as a diversion. The center may be a nice place to visit, but it's not necessarily the most interesting or most educational or healthiest place for dissent to live. Oppositions too happily ensconced in the center, or in its academic suburbs, even as *The Opposition*, find themselves no longer in active opposition.

I am, of course, some kind of old-fashioned politico as well as an old-fashioned feminist. I dislike the loose use of the term "political" to include anyone using quotation marks to reflect the status quo, for whatever reasons. I dislike the replacement of the word "political" with the more courteous, less threatening "critical." Solomon-Godeau is probably right when she says that few successful artists want to be called "political" because it means being "ghettoized within a [tiny] art world preserve." (But do those artists really think that their politics or lack thereof go unnoticed in the center?) She also cites the implication "that all other art is *not* political" and says that the term "tends to suggest a politics of content and to minimize, if not efface, the politics of form." True enough, though I know plenty of "political artists" whose prime instrument is precisely the politics of form—the integration of what they have to say with how they say it. "Critical practice," on the other hand, is so broad a term as to be scattershot and meaningless if the criticism has no perceptible target or goal. To take on the mantle, or epithet, of "political" intentions may in this day and age be unwise and unpopular, but it also makes a commitment to meaning. As Gregory Lukow wrote in another context:

It is ironic, in this age of flattened irony, that cynicism has come to permit the embrace of negation, of critique, while at the same time allowing one to ignore the implications of criticism. Via cynicism, criticism has become quotidian, yet ritualized, hollow, hip. . . . Dissent no longer needs to be neutralized. It is part of the act of submission.

How, then, can feminists involved with art take the genuine emotions learned



PETAH COYNE *Untitled* installation, 1987–88, Whitney Museum of American Art at the Equitable Center, New York. Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Petah Coyne, a New York artist, has current shows at the Jack Shainman Gallery and the Brooklyn Museum.

from lived experience and the insights gained from theory, and use them as a wedge to open feminism up to issues of race and class on a deeper, more honest level? We need to admit how little we know and to build our next theoretical rung on two supports: acknowledgment of racism as a white people's problem, and at the same time acknowledgment of our own ignorance about the ways it works within the feminist community. Investigations of gender should implicitly include other entwined differences. We don't need to settle for the lowest common denominator—the generalizations about women that were important because they brought us together. It's time to get down to specifics again. I

remember Barbara Ehrenreich pointing out that we all have several alliances in and out of the feminist community; we might simultaneously be a woman, a Chicana, a wage worker, a Catholic, a lesbian, a mother, and a socialist. We don't want to iron out all those honorable wrinkles, but to understand the varied ways in which we and other women

experience our multiple identities, and how our priorities are constructed.

For years, I have been told by women artists of color that they do not want to be forced into being "political," or sometimes even to be identified as "people of color" at all. I wonder about this, even though as a feminist committed to cross-cultural comprehension, I have to listen when Michele Wallace, for instance, says:

*The feminist dictum that the personal is political now becomes a kind of killjoy esthetic. . . . Paradoxically, while black feminism might be expected to focus upon the women's movement's favorite issue—the feminization of poverty—the most compelling articulations of black feminist thought have not been political, but literary works, from Toni Morrison's *Bluest Eye* to Ntozake Shange's *Nappy Edges*. The economic difficulties of black female experience have not precluded but rather seem to demand the symbolic resolution of literary expression. Perhaps*

writing fiction is what Zora Neale Hurston once called, wistfully, "picking from a higher bush."

Postmodern feminism offers the possibility of presence in the place of absence, even as it wallows in that absence. But it is only a partial presence so long as it omits the absence of diverse races and classes. Hal Foster asked, "What is the Other of postmodernism?" And Michael Walsh replied, "If it has no self, it has no Other." If for women, "there is no experience of the body outside of representation," we are deprived of a center from which to venture forth to change that misrepresentation. And if the deconstructivists would deprive us of a self, the essentialists—by idealizing and overgeneralizing—can deprive us of a respected female Other.

The time has come for feminist artists and writers to take the risk of trying to reconstruct, even knowing that we risk building another partially false, interim

edifice of female identity; even though we, as women with such a diversity of experiences and ideas, will no doubt contradict ourselves in identifying and representing each other. This new image of woman, then, may be a setup for renewed shattering, even as it is formed. But at least we won't be stuck forever with the increasingly smaller fragments of a mirror so splintered that we can no longer see ourselves as wholes.

NOTE: This article was written two years ago. Since then, the dialogue has progressed. I'd like to have had time to reconsider some points and refine others, but I didn't, so the above should be read in the spirit of "notes" rather than as a completed thesis of any kind.



Lucy R. Lippard is a writer and activist who lives in New York and Boulder, Colorado. She is completing a book for Pantheon called *Mixed Blessings: Contemporary Art and the Cross-Cultural Process*.

CHRISTY RUPP *Humanitarian Aid*, 1987–88, steel, oxidized metal, 6" × 9¼" × 9". Courtesy P.P.O.W., New York. Christy Rupp is a sculptor studying the relationship between economics and the environment.



PHOTO: ADAM REICH

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

Working without the pressure of success.

Not having to be in shows with men.

Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs.

Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty.

Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine.

Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position.

Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others.

Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood.

Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits.

Having more time to work after your mate dumps you for someone younger.

Being included in revised versions of art history.

Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius.

Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit.

Please send \$ and comments to:
Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276

GUERRILLA GIRLS CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

Guerrilla Girls formed in the spring of 1985 to combat sexism in the art world.
They decided to use tactics and strategies appropriate to the 1980s and to remain anonymous
in order to draw attention to issues rather than to personalities.

SHARINGS

FREDA
GUTTMAN



Members of a small community of locked-out sugar workers, Hacienda Consuelo, La Carlota City, Negros Occidental

A "sharing" is what Filipinos call it—a visit with people for the purpose of learning about the realities of their lives, about their struggles against poverty, unemployment, underemployment, exploitation, and oppression and about the various ways in which they are trying to overcome these conditions.

"Sharings" also work in intensely personal ways to forge bonds of solidarity between the Filipino people and their many foreign visitors.

In the five weeks that I spent in the Philippines in 1987, I was privileged to be able to have many "sharings" with women from all sectors of life—peasants, artists, urban poor, prostitutes, church and human rights activists, health workers, feminists, students, lawyers. Several of the women that I met had been imprisoned, in

some cases with young children, and tortured during the Marcos years. Everywhere in the Philippines, an astounding number of women are organized and organizing, fighting persistent structural conditions of injustice and oppression that have not changed with the coming of Cory Aquino. Broad coalitions exist that network vigorously within the country as well as reaching out to women's groups in other countries. The most prominent is *Gabriela*, a federation of about 100 women's groups.

In the Philippine context it is not possible to see women's emancipation as an isolated or separate process. It is closely interwoven into the fabric of the people's struggle, which is national and democratic in character. For example, the terrible exploitation of women and children in the "entertainment" industry

is produced by a cruel and unjust, semi-feudal society that forces most people to live in grinding poverty. At home and abroad, that industry is one of the chief earners of foreign currency reserves for the government.

Five American military bases, stockpiled with nuclear weapons, take up vast tracts of prime land, pollute with nuclear wastes, and oversee low-intensity conflict strategies, reminiscent of Vietnam. Thirty thousand

Peasant family living on an experimental farm,
project of Negros Council on Peace and People's Development,
funded by Japanese solidarity groups



ABOVE:
Two activists,
Task Force Detainees,
Manila



Filipinas, living in abject conditions around the bases, cater to the "rest and recreation" needs of the servicemen inside. A significant number have been infected with the AIDS virus. *Gabriela* points to this degradation and exploitation of Filipino women as one of the strongest arguments for the removal of the bases, and so they take part in that struggle.

At the same time, there is a consensus among the women's organizations that women suffer a double oppression and that their needs must be addressed and fought for simultaneously with all the other struggles.

I hope that through these portraits of women that I met in the Philippines, a kind of "sharing" can happen between them and *Heresies'* readers.

Freda Guttman is a Canadian artist living in Montreal who does multimedia installations with a political content.

Chairperson, Wives of
Small Fishermen's
Organization,
Bacolod City,
Negros Occidental

HISTORIAS

Women Tinsmiths of New Mexico

HARMONY
HAMMOND



Conchita Quitana
Lopez cuts tin.

Because of its climate and terrain, and because of its history as a Spanish colony and later as a Mexican territory, New Mexico was able to keep its traditional art forms alive and intact until U.S. colonization nearly devastated all forms of native expression.

Although the actual historical role of women in these traditional arts is unclear, Janet LeCompte, in her article "The Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico, 1821–1846," has noted that the culture of New Mexican women was quite different from Anglo women in the East who, with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, had already lost their economic importance. Because of New Mexico's isolation, the New Mexican woman was able to retain equal status and power within the community until U.S. colonization. She retained wages and property, could keep her maiden name if she so chose, and had many other legal rights. Often women had occupations outside the home, and women were not barred from "men's work." "While there was a division of labor between the sexes, the distinction was quite flexible and men and women often played parallel or complementary roles in accomplishing one overall task."¹

In the Southwest today, Hispanic and Native American family members not only support each other's creative activities, but frequently work together on the same objects. Where a woman is the only artist in the family, she usually has the strong support of male family members. This is often a matter of basic economics. If a woman has a market for the art she makes, it is to everyone's benefit to help her—sometimes even to the extent of helping make the objects although they are sold under her name.

The "cult of signature," so prevalent in Euro-Western art, does not have the same meaning in the Southwest, where the issue of who signs the art-object seems to be primarily a function of the craftsman's judgment about how to attract the tourist market. Marianne L. Stoller writes about this in *El Palacio*, the magazine of the Museum of New Mexico: "Meeting the public and meeting the public's expectations are held to be more important than claiming individual creation of the work. . . . There are

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

many cases in which men's work was sold under their wives' names because the work was marketed out of their homes and it was then the women who met the public."² In contrast, when work that was jointly created by a man and a woman has been marketed in the art gallery world, it has frequently been attributed to the man.

A Brief History of Tinsmithing

New Mexican tinsmiths can be traced back to Spanish artesanos who crafted beautiful functional objects from precious metals during the Moorish occupation of Spain, and who brought their metalworking skills with them when they colonized Old Mexico (1598-1821). However, when the Spaniards arrived in New Mexico, they found comparatively little silver and gold and were forced to use tin ("poor man's silver") to make devotional objects for their newly built chapels and missions. (The first candelabras, nichos, frames, crosses, and processional staves were made to light and enhance the chapel interior.) But even getting tin was difficult.

By the late 1830s, small quantities of tin plate were coming across the Santa Fe Trail from the East or up from Mexico on the Chihuahua Trail, but the art of tinsmithing itself did not really develop until 1846 when the United States colonized New Mexico and the army brought lard, lamp oil, and coffee in large, square 50-pound tin containers. New Mexicans saw a wonderful new material in these discarded tins. They salvaged or bought the tins, cut them up, and reworked the pieces into a range of domestic objects including sconces, pie-safes, boxes, chandeliers, and frames for pictures and mirrors. Frequently the embossed imprint or painted name of the company that manufactured the product or tin can be found on work of this period.

With the coming of the railroad in 1880, larger quantities of tin and other decorative materials such as glass, wallpaper, religious lithographs, and paint were available. Village metalworkers combined these new materials with the tin, and responding to the local taste for "decoration," began to develop what was to become a truly local art form, which flourished all along the Rio Grande Valley. In fact, ornamental tin became far more popular in New Mexico than it ever was in Old Mexico, where it never developed the same high degree of technical and expressive sophistication.

The tin used in late-19th-century New Mexico was tin plate, a soft iron

sheet covered with a very thin coat of tin. Later, roofing terne was used because it was more durable and wouldn't rust. Its lead content made it softer and easier to shape, but eliminated its use for eating utensils.

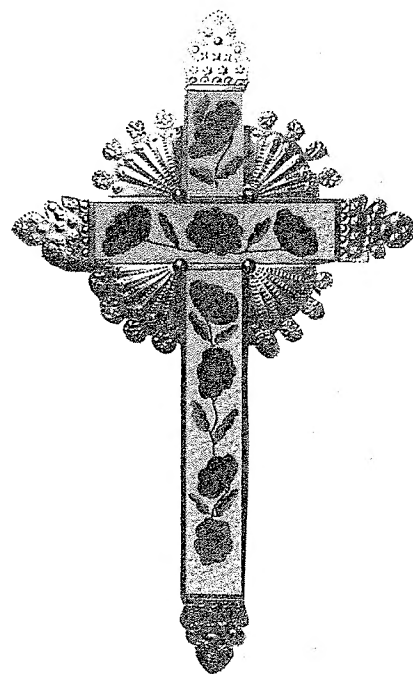
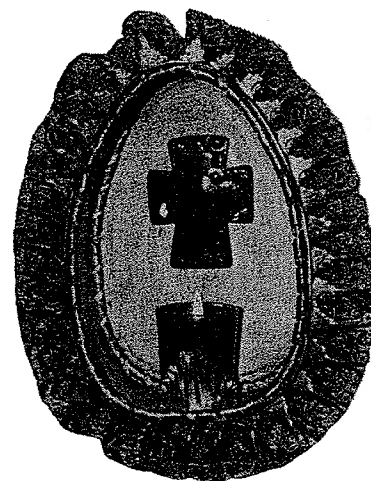
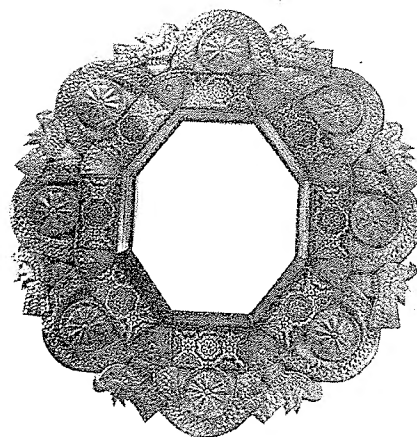
Ironically, the same railroad that brought the tin almost caused the demise of tinwork and the other traditional arts. It introduced a flood of cheap manufactured goods from the East that became status symbols. New commercial frames and electric lighting fixtures reduced the need for handmade articles; people no longer wanted the crude products of the tinsmiths and other artesanos.

The art of tinsmithing almost disappeared until an influx of Anglo collectors and museum curators in the 1920s and '30s created a new interest. The Spanish Colonial Arts Society and the WPA Federal Arts Projects helped revive traditional architecture and art forms. The New Mexico Arts Project (part of the WPA) sponsored workshops, especially in the rural areas, to teach the dying native crafts, and then as a means of cultural documentation, hired people to recreate traditional pieces for museum collections and the newly constructed public buildings. It was hoped that the arts and crafts could offer economic alternatives for the impoverished Hispanic population during the Depression.

The Native Market, a retail store in Santa Fe in the 1930s, played a major role in the revival of Spanish crafts, sponsoring the first Spanish Market in 1929. The current Spanish Market has been an annual event since the 1950s. It is sponsored and juried by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society and displays the work of artesanos from the city and northern rural areas.

The Craft of Tinsmithing

Traditionally tinsmiths either made or inherited their tools, which somewhat resemble those for leatherwork or mak-



Right top to bottom:

ANGELINA MARTINEZ DELGADO Tin frame mirror with wallpaper. Collection International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art, a unit of the Museum of New Mexico.

CONCHITA QUITANA LOPEZ Nicho made from tin ham cans.

EMILIO and SENAIDA ROMERO Tin frame cross with *colcha* embroidery. Collection International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art, a unit of the Museum of New Mexico.



\$6.75

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